

THE PROFESSION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
IN SAUDI ARABIA: A SOCIO-CULTURAL
PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This thesis examines public relations in Saudi Arabia as an occupational group. The thesis investigates the knowledge public relations practitioners possess, and how Saudi culture and public communication factors affect public relations practitioners. The thesis offers insights into the cultural background of the country, public communication and public relations practice in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, it provides an analysis of theories of the profession and the relationship between the profession and public relations occupation.

For the purposes of this research, in-depth unstructured interviews were used to collect data from 27 practitioners. A constructivist paradigm was utilised to examine the Saudi practitioners' perceptions of knowledge, culture, public communication. Moreover, the thesis has followed a socio-cultural approach and theories of the profession to investigate the empirical data.

The thesis has several contributions to knowledge. Firstly, it brings an understanding of the role of the state in the process of professionalization. Using Vygotsky's theories the thesis has found that educational institutions influence PR practice and this results in lack of progress and limited opportunities for change, learning and career movement.

Secondly, the thesis found that there is disconnection between theories that are taught in universities with PR programmes and PR practices. The thesis found that there is a problematic nature of abstract knowledge, which determines the disconnection between communication theories and PR practice. Moreover, there is a disconnection between the practice immersed in culture and that cultural practices are stronger than professional practice. Finally, the thesis has contributed to the literature by finding out that ethics in Western countries are regarded as something that is developed by a professional body in a way that relates to society, however in Saudi Arabia the Muslim values and ethics are implemented directly in the work context and ethics is not developed by a professional body.

Key words: Saudi Arabia, Public relations profession, Socio-cultural theory, Culture.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother Norah Almogbel who has been the greatest supporter in my life and to my father Abdullah Almahraj, who has always helped and encouraged me. This work is also dedicated to my brothers, sisters, aunt Husa Almahraj, my relatives and friends for the encouragement they have offered me during this long academic journey. I take this opportunity to also thank my British friends who have made me feel like home especially Mike and Susan.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis investigates the public relations (PR) occupation in Saudi Arabia (SA). The thesis particularly describes the conceptual frameworks that PR practitioners use in every day PR practice, it examines the cultural context that influences PR practice and it investigates the effect of public communication factors on PR practitioners.

PR practitioners in SA are an emerging occupational group that functions in a complex culturally conservative society that tries to maintain traditions in a highly modern developed country. The thesis makes a contribution to PR literature by providing new information on PR in SA and thus offers a different perspective on this subject.

Generally, PR has been understood from a Western perspective. For example, concepts such as the public sphere are viewed and understood through Habermas' (1989) and Dewey's theories (1924). Notions such as 'profession' were widely discussed by Western theorists (Parsons 1954; Johnson 1972; Berlant 1976; Larson 1977; Friedson 1983; MacDonald 1995) and PR studies have had Western views (Bernays 1984; Yang and Taylor 2013; Alterman 2015). The question is to what extent this set of ideas can be used in investigating PR practice in an Islamic country such as SA. By examining PR education and typical PR practices in this area (see the chapter entitled 'Political, cultural and public communication environment of Saudi Arabia'), the thesis raises questions about the nature of the knowledge that practitioners use. This critical approach focuses in conceptual terms on the strong framing of public relations in existing literature and research as an occupation group, or indeed a profession. On the other hand, it aims to remain cautious about the way in which the profession can be fitted into the historical and cultural logic of SA.

1.1 Research problem

PR in SA has been examined previously by researchers, such as Alanazi (2013), who analysed PR at universities, Al Eissa (2012) who examined the professionalism of PR in SA and Al Fehad (1998) and Al Qahtani (2004) who wrote about the role of PR in dealing with crises. Additionally, Abdelhay (2014) has examined the culture and PR in SA and the Emirates, however, the research focused on measuring the usage of PR models. Moreover, Abdelhay used Hofstede's cultural dimensions, which have been criticised by several researchers, e.g., Baskerville (2003), Signorini et al. (2009), Bardhan and Weaver (2011), Khashman and Large (2011), Courtright et al. (2011), L'Étang (2012) and, Venaik and Brewer (2013), for ignoring unique cultural features, for generalising cultures and for suggesting that culture is static and never changes.

Studies have shown that PR in SA is treated as an administrative function, instead of as a communication function, and there is a limited view of PR departments in companies. Moreover, Saudi PR practitioners are subject to international influences, and while their numbers have increased, private organisations and governmental institutions still do not understand the role of PR practice (Al-Enad 1990; Alanazi 1996; Kirat 2005). PR practitioners working in PR departments are assigned administrative and social protocol functions, such as picking up guests from the airport, arranging visas, booking hotel rooms, interpersonal communications (Alanazi 1996; Alkadi 2007). PR departments are not involved in PR campaigns, research and management crises, but they are rather limited to secretarial duties (Alanazi 1996; Alkadi 2007). Additionally, there is a lack of PR experts, PR training, and there are limited budgets for PR departments and limited communication with the media (Alanazi 1996; Alkadi 2007). PR, as a subject, is taught in universities, however, PR books, which are mostly translated Western books, are generally not available outside universities (Algalab 2011). There are also training courses in PR that are offered by private companies, although, these courses are weak in offering high quality knowledge (Aldubaikhi 2013).

The literature on PR in SA has offered some insight into the practice of PR in this area, however, the existing research that was undertaken both by Western researchers and authors with a Middle Eastern background, depends on theoretical underpinning created within the context of Western intellectual landscape that emerged alongside social developments in the Western post-Enlightenment world, a combination of the emergence of the secular modern state, capitalist economy, and technical-scientific knowledge. Moreover, there is a gap in the literature on PR in SA in terms of knowledge, public communication and culture. For this reason, this thesis tries to fill the gap in the literature by looking at three aspects. Firstly, it examines the knowledge PR practitioners possess, and asks where it is that they acquire their knowledge, if the knowledge provided is useful, and how this knowledge affects their practice. Secondly, the thesis examines cultural aspects, such as the family, the tribe, Islamic culture, and traditions in order to discover the impact on PR communication, PR duties and the overall influence on PR practice in SA. Thirdly, it provides an insight into how public communication factors, such as censorship, self-censorship, the relationships with journalists, affect the way practitioners communicate with their stakeholders, and how this generally affects PR.

The thesis brings several significant contributions to knowledge. One of the key contributions of the thesis is that it develops a greater understanding of the knowledge and practice of Saudi PR practitioners and the influence of cultural features, such as conservatism, privacy and boundaries, family and tribe and the effects of public communication factors on PR practice. Another significant contribution is an understanding of the nature and utility of abstract knowledge, tacit knowledge and hands-on knowledge in Saudi PR practice and the role of the state in the process of professionalization and its influence on the PR sector.

Research aims and objectives

The thesis raises questions about the role of culture, public communication in PR practice in Saudi Arabia and about the key concepts PR practitioners employ in their work. The thesis aims to address these issues through exploring the conceptual frameworks used by Saudi PR practitioners in their work, to analyse the extent to which Saudi PR practitioners work is affected by public communication factors and

to establish the degree to which PR practitioners' work is influenced by Saudi culture.

These above aims raise the following objectives of the research:

- To provide information on what type of knowledge practitioners use in every day practice and which type of knowledge is more useful.
- To provide information on the cultural features that PR practitioners use in their work and what cultural features influence their work.

Research questions

- How do cultural factors, such as cultural customs, Islamic culture and religion influence PR practice and PR as an occupational activity in Saudi Arabia?
- To what extent do public communication factors, such as censorship, self-censorship and media relations influence PR practice?
- What key concepts do Saudi Arabian PR practitioners employ in their work? What knowledge do they possess and use, is it a shared knowledge, and are PR practitioners aware of their PR duties, and how do they utilise their knowledge in their practice?

1.2 Theoretical approaches

It is important to note that the thesis takes account of the multi-paradigmatic universe of PR research. Different concepts and theories are presented on the subject of PR and culture (Banks 1995; Valentini 2007; Bardhan and Weaver 2011), globalisation (Weir 2010; Bardhan and Weaver 2011; Sriramesh 2012) cultural identity (Hodges 2011) and also criticism of the usage of certain theories in studying PR and culture, such as Hofstede's Dimensions and Grunig's Excellence Theory.

The approach in this thesis is inspired by Vygotsky's constructivism that views culture and the key factor in cognitive development. Vygotsky, as a psychologist was primarily interested in the development of an individual in a social process and of

human intelligence formed within context of society and culture. In this thesis, a similar view is taken of the development of the profession, or occupational group, whose cognition, or set of concepts applied in the pursuit of professional life, is shaped by interaction with the culture.

When discussing the concept of knowledge that the practitioners possess, the thesis examines how institutions and associations contribute to the development of the PR occupation by providing theoretical knowledge. Associations have a role in shaping the PR occupation and raising the standards of work, and often they engage in a process of the professionalisation of the occupation. This thesis utilises the theories of Yang and Taylor (2013), Jackson (1970) and Larson (1977) in order to understand the extent to which the PR occupation in SA exhibits the features of a profession, and the associations' roles in the process of professionalisation.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of seven chapters:

The first chapter introduces the research problem and explains why this thesis is valuable by looking at previous research concerning PR in SA. and also at research related to culture and PR. Additionally, it discusses factors that affect PR, such as public communication, professionalism and culture.

Chapter 2 'The political, cultural and public communication environment of Saudi Arabia' gives an overview of the Saudi cultural and political background, public communication features, the knowledge that PR practitioners have, by examining the literature on PR training and research in the Middle East, the educational system, and the role of PR associations. This chapter follows from the constructivist, socio-cultural approach in addressing the specific broad socio-cultural context within which the performance of public relations is conducted in SA and its knowledge is constructed.

Chapter 3 ‘Professionalising public relations practice in Saudi Arabia’ examines the concept of profession as the way in which the construction of institutionalization of public relations knowledge and practice has been tackled in studies of public relations. The discussion covers key aspects of this stream of work, such as the relationship between the PR occupation and the concept of profession, the case for professionalisation, and the role of professional associations in the development of the professions. The chapter also examines the concepts of profession and ethics in the Arab world. This study provides additional insights into the subject of PR and culture by looking at both Western and non-Western PR models.

Chapter 4, is the methodology chapter (‘An overview of the research methods and the philosophical paradigm’) and discusses the main methodological approach and methods employed in this thesis. The chapter explains the adoption of the qualitative approach, providing the explanation of the data, consisting of a number of in-depth interviews were conducted and analyses used in relation to the research questions. The chapter includes insights into the constructivist paradigm that the present study uses. Then, the study explains why qualitative methods were used in researching PR in SA, how snowball sampling was used and explains the process of data analysis and the usage of Nvivo software.

Chapter 5, ‘Understanding Saudi Arabia public relations practice. The interrelationship between knowledge, culture and public communication’ presents two steps in the analysis of the data. First, codes and categories that emerged from the interviews and the relationship between them are examined. Next, the chapter presents the themes that emerged from the categories, such as the knowledge theme, the culture theme and the public communication theme.

Chapter 6 ‘An interpretation of empirical findings on knowledge, culture and public communication’ provides discussions of the findings, and it focusses on answering the research questions by discussing the most important themes that emerged and the new findings that also emerged.

Chapter 7 The final chapter, 'Conclusion and implications' draws final conclusions on the new findings in the area of culture, the public communication and knowledge of PR practitioners, and discusses the theoretical implications of the findings.

Chapter 2: The political, cultural and public communication environment of Saudi Arabia

Before proceeding to examine PR practice in SA, it is necessary to introduce the cultural and political background of the country. In order to understand the PR practitioner's behaviour and knowledge this thesis needs to look at the social context that has contributed to their development. This analysis will provide the information that is needed in order to understand what concepts Saudi PR practitioners employ in their work, to be able to position PR practices within the Saudi traditions of public communication and to be able to understand how PR practitioners' work is influenced by the local culture. This chapter offers insights into the culture, public communication and PR practice in SA and is based on literature that uses sources within Saudi culture, such as Al-Ahmed (1987), Al-Kahtani (1999), Zayani (2005), Kraidy (2006), Samin (2008), Awad (2010), Sardar (2014) and Abouzaki (2015). Later in the chapter, the thesis examines PR in the Gulf countries and SA by using sources from literature that focuses on PR in this area (Alanazi 1996; Abu Osbaa 1998; Algalab 2011; Al-Abdulkarem 2013; Abdelhay 2014; Ayyad and Farouk 2014; Badran 2014).

It is important to state that the present thesis uses the emic approach. The emic approach, which was first developed by Pike (1967), is used in research that is focused on examining behaviours that are specific to a culture (Ho and Cheung 2007). This means researchers develop theories that relate to the local cultural context. Emic approaches, for example, have been used in the study of family cohesion in China (Ho and Cheung 2007). In this case, the emic approach gives the researcher the opportunity to examine the reactions, beliefs, views and also the psychology of practitioners and to understand these in local cultural terms (Berry 1999; Ho and Cheung 2007).

The emic approach allows the researcher to understand how Saudi culture is built, to understand practitioners' personalities, attitudes, how they live their daily lives (Berry 1999). Moreover, human activities cannot be divided from their cultural context (Ibid.). These activities can be understood if the researcher views them from the point of view of the individual who is under examination (Helfrich 1999). The critique of the emic approach is that there is a risk that individuals may misinterpret their own behaviour because individuals may communicate based on what they think is socially desirable (Helfrich 1999).

2.1 A View of the present Saudi Arabian political and social background

SA is an Arab Muslim monarchy with its constitution and law system based on the *Qu'ran* (Beg 2008). In order to understand the ways in which the *Qu'ran* is at the centre of the kingdom's rule, the thesis will outline a brief history of the formation of the state. SA was officially established in 1932, under King Abdulaziz Al Saud. Until that date, independent tribes had ruled Arabia since the eighteenth century (Beg 2008). According to the Islamic history specialist Muhammad Beg (2008), who has studied and published extensively in the field of Islamic religion, during the eighteenth century a Muslim religious scholar called Muhammad Ibn Abdalwahhab started reviving the religion of Islam, which focused on monotheism, and asked all Muslims to stop practising animism, which consisted of praying to tombs and trees that were considered sacred (Beg 2008). Abdalwahhab wanted to return to the early Islamic teachings that the Prophet Muhammad had preached, which were considered to be the pure Islamic teachings (Beg 2008). The teachings are against the exaggerated artistic decoration of mosques and do not permit the existence of a mediator between Allah and the individual, and they are also against the cult of saints (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2016). Muhammad Ibn Abdalwahhab found a powerful ally in Muhammad Ibn Saud, the ruler of the town of Diriyah, and together they worked to establish a new state based on monotheism (Beg 2008).

After several battles, such as the invasion of Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt in 1818 and the exile of the Saud family in 1824, Abdulaziz Ibn Abd al-Rahman, a descendant of the Saudi ruler, recaptured Riyadh in 1902 and then managed to form

alliances between the 88 Arabic tribes in the area, uniting the Arab peninsula (Wilson and Graham 1994; Beg 2008). By 1929, the King had formed a committee of virtue called The General Presidency of the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vices that would promote Islamic values and Saudi laws, which were created on the basis of Islam (Beg 2008). It was argued thus, that the SA monarchy is not considered a monarchy in the European sense. This means that the Saudi monarchy is under the rule of divine law, also called *Shari'ah* (Beg 2008; Sardar 2014).

It must be noted that this was also the way that monarchy functioned in the Middle Ages in Europe. The church had a function in the state and the ruler was considered a minister of God on Earth (Tierney 1988). Nevo (1998) explained why the Islamic religion is situated at the foundation of the SA government "In the absence of political participation in the secular Western sense, religion has provided a major and almost exclusive source of legitimacy for the rule of the Saudi royal family (the other, secondary one, is tribal allegiance)" (Nevo 1998, p. 34).

However, in SA, the King is not considered a religious leader and the SA monarchy is a theocratic monarchy since the power belongs to the people that form the country (Beg 2008). This means that the King has to consult the tribal leaders on any decision he takes regarding the faith of the country. In other words, "the reliance on Arab tribalism and Islam means that a Saudi king, besides being the head of state, is also viewed as the leader of the tribe, as well as the Imam or religious leader of the Kingdom's faithful" (Wilson and Graham 1994, p. 36). The King has an official title that shows the connection with the religion, he is called the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (Bondura 2010).

With regard to the political system of the country, Al-Ahmed (1987) has noted that the description of SA as being an authoritarian, traditional, tribal and absolute monarchy is contradictory and illustrates the confusion of Western researchers who are trying to categorise it through Western standards. Kechichian (2001) stated:

While ruling family politics in the Kingdom share many characteristics with other hereditary monarchies, it is unique in a number of aspects. The family's sheer size and complexity, in terms of both its internal structure and composition and its connections to Saudi society, make the Saudi political system markedly different from other past and present monarchies. In addition, family politics have developed in the context of vast wealth and profound transformations that have altered the face of Saudi Arabia, perhaps permanently. (Kechichian 2001, p. 22)

While the country is well known for its oil resources, it is also acknowledged as being the centre of Islamic world, due to its two holy mosques, Makkah and Medina (Awad 2010). The country's political system, government and culture are based on the Islamic religion (Beg 2008) and there is a strong and close relationship between the royal family and the religious leaders (the *Ulema*), who have political authority and participate in the government's decisions (Awad 2010).

The religious leaders have the authority to question and delegitimize the government's decisions or with individuals' actions through religious rulings, called *Fatwa* (Awad 2010). These decisions affect all areas, including the way in which the country is governed, and even modern practices, such as media content. One example of such influence is the case of satellite dishes (Al-Kahtani 1999). In 1994, the *Ulema* pressured the government and succeeded in banning the satellite dishes because the population would be affected by Western cultural values, such as the way women are depicted and references to alcohol and religious beliefs, which would affect Islamic values (Al-Kahtani 1999). The media are not only influenced by religious leaders but also by legislation and mechanisms that supervise and organise this sector. A more detailed discussion about public communication in SA and its relation to PR continues in the next section.

2.2 Public communication

This section examines the context of public communication in Saudi Arabia. The thesis acknowledges that the term 'public communication' originates from Western theories of media and is therefore a term that is culturally specific to Western cultures. According to Ferguson (1990, p. IX) public communication has been

defined as “those processes of information and cultural exchange between media institutions, products and publics which are socially shared, widely available and communal in character”. Public communication thus is seen as crucial to the understanding of public discourses and circulation of cultural symbols, but also as the specific institutional factor in the performance of public relation as mediator between PR clients and the media, including public representation of the client organisations.

In this thesis, the term public communication will be used to refer to the public communication infrastructure in the Middle East, e.g., television, radio, the written press, and will also reflect the population’s internet usage, particularly the use of social media and of websites. It is important to examine media relations as a tradition and as the key area of work in this area, since PR practice depends on public communication infrastructure and several legal and political factors, e.g., the political, social, the religious censorship, the privatisation of the media, access to information and transparency (Bekhit 2009; Krzysiek 2009; Awad 2010; Mellor et al. 2011; Domm 2013). Hence, this section examines empirical studies on censorship, self-censorship, governmental use of the media, media freedom, and freedom of speech.

2.3 An analysis of Middle Eastern media

This section examines the literature on the Middle Eastern media and addresses the research on online media usage and internet penetration in this area. It is important to examine the media infrastructure and the internet penetration and social media usage in SA because this thesis takes account of public communication influences PR.

The media in SA are dominated by the press. There are three newspapers dominating the area in the Arabic language: *Asharq Al-Awsat*, *AlRiyadh* and *Okaz*. The print media in the Middle East are dominated by Saudi media groups, such as SRPC, which publishes over 18 titles in Arabic, English and Urdu (Shoult 2006). Statistics from the Saudi General Authority for Statistics (General Authority for Statistics 2017) show that the number of national newspapers in SA was 13, and from 2013 to

2015, there were 14 newspapers and 440 national printed magazines. In 2015, there were 47 foreign newspapers printed for the immigrant population in languages such as English, Urdu, Hindi, and 537 printed magazines. Moreover, in SA the statistics show that there were 757 electronic national newspapers and 77 electronic national magazines (General Authority for Statistics 2017). The foreign language newspapers are predicted not to lose their popularity due to the presence of the expatriate communities who work in the oil industry (Shoult 2006). If compared to Western Europe, the Middle East still has a high number of newspapers, the number of which has increased due to increasing literacy, which has made newspapers more accessible to the wider population (Dennis et al. 2015).

SA has nine state TV channels and six state radios (Saudi Broadcasting Corporation 2017). Beyond these, there are several channels that broadcast from outside the country, e.g., MBC TV, which is considered the leading Arab TV channel, and other non-Saudi TV stations and LBC (Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation) and Al Jazeera (which is owned by Qatar), which are watched via satellites (Shoult 2006). The population has access to traditional media channels: in 2000 there was one television set for every three people and 95 percent of individuals had access to radios (Cordesman 2003).

Moreover, in the Gulf countries' area 80 percent of the population has cable TV, with more than 700 TV channels in 2014, the TV channels being situated in more than 35 locations, including UAE and SA (Dennis et al. 2015). Televisions create programmes according to their location, interest and demographics. They broadcast classic Western programmes, but also sport, news and culture (Dennis et al. 2015). Awad (2010) stated that the Ministry of Culture and Information owns the media companies that function in SA. The SA media market is not open to foreign investors, despite the fact that the rest of the commercial market in general is open and friendly to international investors. However, there are SA television stations, newspapers and magazines that are privately owned outside the country, but are accessible in the Kingdom, such as MBC TV, *Alarabiya* TV, and the *Alriyady* newspaper (Awad 2010).

The general trend in the Arab media in the Gulf countries in the last 15 years has been towards a regionalisation. National newspapers are very popular and influential, as also are the regional ones, such as *Al Jazirah* newspaper (Kraidy 2006). The trend in Arab televisions is to create a media pattern that is accessible to all Arab speaking countries, to appeal to both rural individuals in Egypt and the middle class urban individuals in the Gulf countries. The media also buy Western TV formats from the Netherlands and the United Kingdom and adapt them for Arab audiences (Kraidy 2006).

The convergence of media has brought together mass communication and also interpersonal communication, such as email, instant messaging, discussion boards, online telephone services and social networking sites (Hodkinson 2011). While broadcasting and print technology use one way relationships between a small number of producers and a large audience, the internet has introduced the possibility of interactive mass communication, as well as incorporating a range of interpersonal means of communication (Hodkinson 2011). This convergence has affected the whole world, including the Middle Eastern area.

It is important to look at internet penetration and social media usage in SA because as relevant to the question of mutual influences between public communication and its institutions and public relations practice. For this purpose, Table 1 to show the internet penetration rate and Table 2 was created to illustrate internet users reading Arabic content online in 2016. The information was collected from Dennis et al. 2016.

Table 1: Internet penetration rate

	Emirates	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	Lebanon
2013	88%	85	81	58
2014	96	78	85	62
2015	94	89	91	79
2016	100	84	93	84

Adapted from Dennis et al.2016

Table 2: Internet users reading Arabic content online in 2016

Emirates	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	Lebanon
63%	59%	87%	38%

Adapted from Dennis et al. 2016

As can be seen in Table 3, the traditional media still have a strong following in the Middle East if compared to the online media. However, the internet is gaining popularity, as the penetration rate has increased. Although the internet is quite popular, most users in the Arab world (Arab Gulf countries, Morocco, Yemen, Libya, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Algeria, Tunisia) search and read in Arabic (See Table 2) and most users search for regional rather than international news. Table 4 presents the percentages of social media platform usage in SA and was adapted from research undertaken by Kemp (2016).

Table 3. Traditional media versus online media following 2016

	Emirates	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	Lebanon
Television usage	70%	41%	49%	75%
Newspaper	25%	32%	18%	8%
Online news	29%	42%	39%	25%

Adapted from Dennis et al.2016

Table 4: The social media usage

Active social media users (Kemp 2016)	11 Million users	Female 19%, male 81%
Saudi WhatsApp users (Kemp 2016)	27%	N/A
Saudi Facebook users (Kemp 2016)	25%	N/A
Saudi Twitter users (Kemp 2016)	20%	N/A
Saudi Instagram users	17%	N/A

Table 4: (Adapted from Kemp 2016)

The development of Internet technology fulfilled the need for a public discourse in the Middle East, Samin (2008) stated that there is a proliferation of Internet bulletin boards among Saudi youths, and tribal groups have created a semi-public forum, because the new technology encourages self-expression. Research shows that the SA population is one of the most active populations on the Internet in the Middle East, and that around 53 percent of internet users participate in online communities. As the research shows, use of the internet has increased fivefold in the area in ten years (Communications and Information Technology Commission 2014). However, Samin (2008) has stated that the fact that individuals go on the internet to express their opinions should not be viewed as being a success in a developing public discourse but only as a development of the media environment in the Middle East.

2.4 Media, democracy and censorship

In order to understand PR practitioners' work in the SA public communication context, this section pursues the broad questions of the role of the media in SA, and more specifically the way in which censorship affects the dissemination of information.

There are different views on the Arab media and their capabilities. Researchers, such as Zayani (2005), see the Western media as offering an ideal model and they believe that what exists in the Western media is absent in the Arab world, a society where the media's role is to inform citizens about what is happening, to debate the audience response, to discuss what to do, and to help them to act better as citizens. Moreover, Zayani (Ibid.) considers that the media in the west have the roles of a watchdog in monitoring the government, promoting citizen participation and public awareness, if compared to the Middle East (Ibid.) Zayani's argument, however, is not based on research on Western media but seems instead to be a personal opinion. In a critical article on media, Robinson (2016) argues that the Western media have been significantly influenced by governments and have reflected their governments'

agendas, and Western media have often failed their democratic expectations that are related to independence (Ibid.). In accordance with this opinion, in a comparison of media systems theory that is based on research on media institutions from Western countries, Hallin and Mancini (2004) have argued that political systems have influenced media and have determined three models of media systems: the polarised pluralist, democratic corporatist, and the liberal model.

There are several researchers, however, who are optimistic about the present Arabic media. Seib (2007) perceives the role of the media in the Middle East as being positive, because the new media have influenced democratisation. Khamis (2007) argued that empowerment through information is becoming greater with the passing of time, thanks to the influence of TV, internet and cell phones. Nevertheless, despite its greater freedom, there are still limits to the Arab media due to government control and censorship (Ibid.). Ryder (1999) stated that censorship is an exercise of power and domination over the dissemination of information. However, censorship may not necessarily be viewed as being a negative political way of control, but as a way of organising society (Ibid.). No research, however, has shown how censorship affects PR communication and thus this thesis thus aims to understand what censorship entails in PR communication in the way in which they communicate with their stakeholders and the way in which they write press releases.

Khamis (2007) assumes that the Arab world has not successfully changed stereotypes due to the fact that the media are transmitting information that the officials tell them, and not what they have decided to do, and this affects the credibility of the media. On the other hand, Mellor et al. (2011) saw Arab media in a different light and acknowledged that, due to globalisation, the Arab media have undergone a series of changes over the past two decades. The development of Arab satellite channels is a sign of the contra-flow of culture from the Arab region to the rest of the world. Mellor sees the Arab region as being unique, because the commercialisation and liberalisation of selected media industries has gone hand in hand with continuous state intervention and self-censorship.

In an interview undertaken by Zohny (2009) El-Enany saw self-censorship as a self defence mechanism against censorship. According to El-Enany, self-censorship means that when the state censors, writers are aware of the things that may be censored, or of the fact that they may be punished, or their book banned if it were about a serious issue. On the other hand, Bauer (2013), in an article about self-censorship in Saudi social media, has cited a study undertaken by *The New York Times* that noted that criticism of the government, police and authorities is tolerated in the web area, however, religious criticism is not encouraged. Al-Makhadhi (2011) stated that, in the Arab world, self-censorship is actually a skill that is needed by journalists. The author considers this to be a governmental low cost way of controlling what is published and that journalists do not publish negative news of companies due to fear that those companies will stop cooperating.

This positive view of self-censorship is shared by Al-Kablan (2014), who has said that self-censorship is one of the Islamic values that supports the behaviour of Muslims, so self-censorship is one of the factors that guides the person to be successful at work. Many corporations put self-censorship in the menu of their corporation's culture, which means they encourage employees to self-censor since they believe the work's success would not be complete without self-censorship. The self-censorship source is the person themselves, so the real meaning of censorship is when individuals censor their behaviour and actions, and they will carry out all their duties without needing someone else to supervise them (Ibid.). While there are both positive and negative views of self-censorship, these studies do not provide real detailed data on the extent to which self-censorship is used in Saudi Arabia.

The usage of self-censorship may be reduced in the future, and journalists and public opinion behaviour may change as research shows that new generations of journalists have been trained in the Western world and so have brought new genres into the Arab area, such as political debate and talk shows (Mellor et al. 2011). Secondly, the external competition that the Arab media currently face, such as BBC and CNN, has determined the modernisation of private media outlets. Additionally, Mellor et al. (2011) have drawn attention to the fact that the Pan-Arab market is controlled by

business tycoons, particularly from SA. At the same time as airing Western style TV shows, such as reality shows like *Star Academy*, the Arab media also airs religious shows, and these have been aired as a result of criticism from religious leaders who have seen Western shows as a threat to religion (Mellor et al. 2011). It is important to highlight that self-censorship has been discussed in term of the media in the Middle East, however, there is no research to indicate the extent to which this concept is used by PR practitioners. This thesis thus aims to examine how self-censorship is used by PR practitioners, and what self-censorship entails in the practice of PR work in SA.

The factors behind the rise of private media outlets are, first of all, the emergence of a new generation of Arab politicians and heads of state who wish to modernise their state's image through modernising its media institutions (Ibid.). Mellor et al. (Ibid.) considers that Arab governments see the media as a tool with which to influence public opinion, but also as a threat to the ideological foundations of Arabic governments and that they put an accent on the social responsibility of media professionals not to agitate public opinion and to maintain national unity (Ibid.). At the same time, Mellor et al. (Ibid.) believe that Arab countries issue contradictory laws, promoting freedom of speech but, at the same time, prosecuting journalists. Mellor et al. (Ibid.) imply that this may happen due to the Gulf's wealth and the Arabic language. Mellor attempts to assess the effectiveness of the ways in which Arabic governments use media. Firstly, Arabic governments see the media as their monopolies, because broadcasting reaches all of the citizens, regardless of their education. Secondly, the media play a major role in sustaining national unity and the feelings of community. Finally, media are used as a primary tool for political propaganda.

Mellor et al. (2011) consider that there is a growing demand for cultural products, however, there is a lack of skilled labour, which is a challenge to the media. Due to these factors it is considered that, in the future, television will still be captive to institutional and legal limits (Ibid.). The subject of the media being under legislative

control and also under censorship requires a more thorough discussion, which will be continued in the next section.

2.5 Press freedom, censorship and legislation

This section examines the existing literature on media legislation in the Arabian Gulf, then it analyses the debate on the influence of the international media over the local media. The section then continues with an overview of the empirical studies that have been conducted on the topics of Saudi Arabian media legislation and the belief of the local population in those media. The section provides an examination of the literature on media legislation and censorship in this area, because the thesis aims to examine the extent to which government control over media, legislation and censorship affects PR practice.

In the 1950s there was no press legislation in the Arabian Gulf (Alsaqer 2006). There was a small readership and a lack of technology, but without legislation the government closed newspapers if they wanted to. In the 1960s and 1970s the legislation gave more freedom, however, it was still limited to censorship. Before the 1970s, the media depended on the international media. In 1983 the press developed in SA and eight press associations were allowed to publish newspapers and magazines. Part of the media gave space to public opinion. Print media, since the 1990s has enjoyed more freedom, due to the pressures of liberal activism, globalisation, new media and satellite channels (Alsaqer 2006). Several studies on Arab national media concluded that after 9/11 Arab national media underwent a change due to the influence of the international media, such as *Al-Jazeera*. The Arab population started following international channels, to the detriment of the national channels. The national media failed because they could not keep up with the speed of international development and, in order to develop and have more freedom in the press, they needed more independence (Al-Fahad 1981; Hafez 1985; Kayat 1996).

Research by Al-Fahad (1981), Hafez (1985) and Kayat (1996) suggests that there is no guarantee of press freedom in SA, and no law to protect the press. However, an article by Ataf (2016) states that there is a particular law that refers to media freedom

and also to freedom of expression in SA. The law states that the regulations referring to freedom of opinion and expression are inspired by the Islamic *Shariah* and it guarantees freedom of opinion for everyone, as is stated in the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action 1993 (Ataf 2016). The law also provides the means of expression to the mass media, the publishing media, and it also encourages dialogue between publics and organisations and diversity for web publishing. The law states that it prohibits any statements that will affect the honour and rights of individuals (Ataf 2016).

In practice, the media in SA are able to report on diverse news, but it is seldom able to criticise policies (Duffy 2014). Restrictions are placed on criticising foreign policies, or in relation to inciting criminal acts and deliberately causing negative effects on the economy, on promoting false news that is not based on facts. According to Duffy (2014), there are no laws that stop the media from publishing news, however, if news is viewed as being problematic, the government will take action, such as fining journalists or closing media companies.

Research by AL-Fahad (1981), Hafez (1985) and Kayat (1996) suggests that individuals in Arab society believe that the freedom of speech means disrespecting the authorities and that it creates chaos. Studies explain that there is a confusion linked to the freedom of the press and that is why leaders fear it, and this also makes journalists fear the result of the concept. Although the studies state that in recent years, the Arab media have changed due to the development of the internet and satellite TV, this has weakened the government media monopolies and website control (Kayat 1996). According to Kayat (1996), government interference still limits the freedom of the press and religious leaders interfere by pressuring political leaders. The press does not criticise the government, and the press in SA, according to the government, is a tool with which to educate the population and through which to publish government views. It is concluded that the national media do not discuss the problems of the people, the population chooses to read foreign news and to go online to inform themselves (Al-Fahad 1981; Hafez 1985; Kayat 1996). These studies, however, do not offer data from which to conclude which types of foreign

news are read, and what the percentage of the population it is that reads these materials. This discussion of legislation implies that government interference generally affects media practice and therefore the thesis also seeks to understand the extent to which legislation affects the work of PR practitioners, and, in consequence, how practitioners view its effects.

In terms of public readership, fairly recent research offers different data that demonstrates that individuals in the Arab area prefer to go online and read, and they rely exclusively on local media that is written in the Arabic language (Dennis et al. 2015). Moreover, a recent annual survey undertaken in the Middle Eastern region by media professors at the NorthWestern University in Qatar, Everette Dennis, Justin Martin and Rob Wood, which had more than 6,000 respondents, shows that most individuals in the Middle Eastern area have confidence in the media to report the news in a fair manner (see Table 5 below) (Dennis et al. 2015). Moreover, individuals who believe national media can report the news independently, without the interference of government officials, also trust the accuracy of related news. Although credibility in national media has grown in the area, in SA it has declined, as can be seen in Table 5, below (Dennis et al. 2015).

Table 5: Middle Eastern media credibility and independence

Media trust in Middle East (Dennis et al 2015)	Media trust in Saudi Arabia (Dennis et al 2015)	National media independence in Middle East (Dennis et al 2015)	National media independence in Saudi Arabia (Dennis et al 2015)
69%	73% in 2013-69% in 2015	78%	68% in 2013-57% in 2015

Table 5: (Adapted from Dennis et al. 2015)

The following section will look at the Saudi Arabian public sphere and the status of the traditional national media, such as the television and written press.

2.6 The public sphere and government control in Saudi Arabia

The previous section has shown that credibility in traditional media has decreased in SA. To understand this decrease, this thesis needs to examine the literature on the status of the SA public sphere and government control. Abdelhay (2014) has noted that freedom of expression is an important issue in political, social, cultural and economic environments, nevertheless, the media in the Arab world are tied to governments and are controlled by them, and the circulation of information is restricted. For example, Internet sites are blocked in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and SA. Zittrain and Edelman (2002) explain that, in SA, websites that are blocked are those that contradict Islamic beliefs, or those that might influence their culture, those pages that have sexually explicit content, pages related to drugs, alcohol and gambling.

It is important to note, however, that the use of Internet is carried out according to Islamic values, which means that anything that is made public in the media must respect Islamic laws. This could be material that is considered offensive, or material that criticises religion and which is thus not published.

Research by Al-Garni (2000) suggests that the Arab states are fighting to control the public sphere, by investing in media. Zayani (2005) thus considers that the emergence of public opinion in Arab countries has been caused by social changes, urbanisation, and literacy, and that society has started to mobilise. Researchers believe that the industry is under government control (Al-Garni 2000; Awad 2010) and Al-Garni (2000) has implied that this happens because, firstly, radio and television are political tools, due to their ability to reach wide audiences. Secondly, they are used for political nation building and national defence. Thirdly, they are not profitable for commercial companies, and, finally, the government is concerned with their image.

Mellor et al. (2011) see the government's control over media as detrimental to public opinion. Moreover, Mellor believes Arab governments are not comfortable with TV showing political and cultural issues. However, at the same time, he considers that Western style TV in the Arab area has influenced journalism and has created

investigative journalism with the purpose of building public opinion (Mellor et al. 2011). According to Abozayd (2007), in SA, there is a law that allows the government to control the local newspapers in a specific situation. For example, Saudi Publication Law Number 24 says that the freedom of speech in any kind of medium should not cross the Islamic values or the government's rules (Abozayd 2007). Abozayd's (2007) research focused on media in SA and did not provide information on PR work, and therefore the thesis aims to examine how factors such as legislation and Islamic values influence the ways in which PR practitioners communicate and create their messages.

Mellor et al. (2011) considers that there is no proper public sphere in Arab countries, due to the fact that the state can intervene at any time to disrupt it. However, Mellor et al. (Ibid.) fail to recognise the existence of *majlis*, which Badran (2014) and Zubaida (2005) have pointed out. These are traditional social gatherings where people gather to discuss matters that affect their daily lives. Before PR started to develop in the Arabian Gulf area, at the beginning of the 20th century, local populations discussed affairs and spread news at their local mosques, which were considered much more than a place of worship (Badran 2014). These places were also a safe place for travellers, a place for public meetings, and even for protests (Zubaida 2005)

Individuals also got together in semi-private places, such as *majlis* or *diwaniya*, places of social gathering where they discussed local news, news that was not discussed by the media, perhaps that which related to local issues, and they could meet officials to discuss such issues (Alanazi 1996; Zubaida 2005; Badran 2014). Moreover, these places were also used as places to socialise and to influence public opinion (Zubaida 2005). While places like *majlis* and marketplaces, such as shops and stalls, were places of gathering for men, women met in public places, such as baths.

Diwaniya were compared, for example, with the way in which the European nobility used to network in the past. These were considered to be both public and private

spheres (Zubaida 2005). In the Arab traditions, people did not need to set up an appointment with their leaders, and so the *diwaniya* represent the hospitality of Arabs and also an open forum for dialogue. After the telegram, radio and written press were introduced, the population could send messages and receive responses through these tools. The King therefore communicated with his people by using persuasive communication with an openness to changing the state of affairs (Alanazi 1996). So far, this chapter has presented the public communication infrastructure, the media context and the influence of censorship on the media and it has highlighted the existence of a public sphere in SA through the *diwaniya* or *majlis*. These gatherings have a cultural character, as they are strongly related to places where people gather for worship or social events. In order to understand further the way individuals communicate and how cultural features affect their daily life, and in order to have an insight into the culture and understand its possible influence on PR practice, this thesis will continue with an analysis of the culture of Saudi society.

The next section will discuss the empirical studies on the main cultural features of Saudi society, such as the family and the tribe. It will then discuss the literature on the influence of Islam on Saudi Arabian culture, society and lifestyle, and will analyse the debates surrounding Islam and modernity, and why Western values are associated with that modernity. The section will also look at how researchers view Muslim identity, Saudi class structures and cultural sensitivities, then it will look at the debate surrounding the effects of globalisation on Muslim identity and Saudi Arabian culture, and it will also examine Saudi Arabian cultural characteristics, such as class structure, conservatism, the use of language and the influence of education on culture. It is important to examine these aspects of the culture, as the thesis examines how culture influences PR practice. Moreover, in order to understand PR and the behaviour of its practitioners, this thesis will examine PR practitioners' knowledge, the cultural and public communication features that influence them, and thus the thesis looks at how social interaction and social community have contributed to the PR practitioner's individual growth, their knowledge, PR's practice and personal development.

2.7 The foundation of Saudi Arabia and Islamic faith

90 percent of SA's population are ethnic Arabs, the descendants of tribes, and 10 percent are of Afro-Asian descents (Al-Ahmed 1987). It is also important to note that the country has a high number of immigrants, who might have an influence on the local culture. This subject will be thoroughly developed later in the chapter, in the section entitled 'Foreign workers in Saudi Arabia'.

The Islamic faith dominates all spheres of Saudi life, it rules over the social norms, traditions, behaviour and social relations, and it denounces all forms of discrimination based on race, colour or gender. As Rahman and Muktar (2014, p. 20) put it "For Muslims, Islam is more than a religion, for them Islam is a complete way of life". Nevo (1998) added that the Muslim Arab identity consists of the Islamic, the Arab and the local, national sense, such as the tribe, the family and the geographical region. Facey et al. (2006, p. 4) have pointed out that "While Saudi society has forged many fundamental changes in recent decades, it has maintained an unbroken link with its roots through Islam and the Arabic language, two of mankind's most powerful and enduring legacies".

SA was founded in 1902, and before that the population was formed of different tribes with different traditions and cultures. However, the local population only had the Islamic and Muslim identity as a common feature before the new country was formed and before they had a sense of belonging to a nation (Bondura 2010). The connection with the two holy mosques is also shown by the titles of the Saudi King (The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques) (Ibid.). The link with Islam is manifested in the Saudis' identity and in their sense of importance, because they are Muslims and they were left with a responsibility to care for and protect the holy mosques (Ibid.).

This type of belief seems to be similar in some respects to American exceptionalism. American exceptionalism refers to the perception that the American nation has an exceptional or unique status when compared to other nations, because God gave a unique spiritual and political destiny (Madsen 1998). This idea was born in the early

1600s with the Massachusetts Bay colonists, who believed that God gave them the chance to create a new country where they could rebuild their lives, realise their spiritual destiny and attempt to create an ideal society. The idea of exceptionalism has, thus, a religious foundation, and this idea has been preserved over time and is now a part of the American identity. The idea of exceptionalism is that the United States serves as a model for humanity in terms of values, its political system and history (Madsen 1998). Saudis also seem to feel a sense of importance and uniqueness, due to the fact that they have the responsibility to protect the two holy mosques. In other words, this type of thinking generates a self-consciousness that is typical and that is unique to American culture, and it makes individuals feel that they are a part of a national unity, with an exceptional sense of purpose and character (Madsen 1998).

2.8 Family, tribe and social classes

Apart from Islam, the concepts of the family and the tribe are important in SA culture, in such a way that the individuals' decisions are taken to benefit the family and the tribe (Al-Saif 1997). Research indicates that, traditionally, the individual is loyal to the tribe and social distinction is not based on wealth, but on to which tribe a person belongs (Georgas et al. 2006). Researchers who have examined the SA lifestyle and traditions have expressed conflicting opinions on how modernity and development has affected the individual, family life and traditions. For example, Facey et al. (2006) consider that the SA society's lifestyle was not affected by modernity. Facey et al. (Ibid.) believe that while the discovery and exploitation of oil produced vital changes in the Saudi quality of life, through the building of infrastructure, the introduction of technological communication, media and the internet, Saudi society has still preserved its traditions and the importance of family and religion has not diminished. Other researchers have stated that Islam did not oppose modern technology but has also used it as an advantage. For instance, smartphone applications have been created for users who wish to read Islamic or Qu'ranic content, and also traditional religious scholars have online profiles and websites on which they express their opinions (Kenney and Moosa 2014).

On the other hand, other researchers believe that family life was affected by development, because large families that used to live under the same roof have shrunk to being nuclear family units (Al-Ahmed 1987). The Saudi Foreign Minister, Adel al-Jubeir, has stated “This is not your grandfather’s Saudi Arabia. Actually, it’s not even my father’s Saudi Arabia anymore – it is not even my generation’s Saudi Arabia anymore” (Friedman 2015, p.1). Friedman (2015) pointed out that Saudi society will change in the future. The population is still very young, as 70 percent are under the age of 30, and changes will come from the fact that a large number of Saudi students study abroad (Friedman 2015). For example, over 200,000 Saudi students studied abroad in 2015. These students are expected to return to their country with Western degrees and this is expected to change the work sector. Moreover, Friedman (2015) has pointed out that there are various reforms that will change the future of the country.

With regard to the social classes, a study which used the Weberian and Marxist approaches to understand classes has shown that Saudi society’s middle class, which is the majority (around 67 percent), works for the state bureaucracy and a very small part works in the private sector, 72 percent work for the public sector and 28 percent in the private one (Alnuaim 2013). The reason why a high number of individuals work for the public sector, is that it has become “a secure haven and an indispensable lifeline” (Ibid.p.37). Due to oil wealth, the government has ensured many benefits for its population, such as free education, free medical care and secure, well paid jobs in the public sector (Hubbard 2016). According to Al-Abdulkader (2009) the reason why Saudis prefer not to choose to work in the private sector is because of smaller salaries, longer working hours, and the lack of job security. The public sector has been viewed as being secure because for a long time the government was the main driver of the national economy and the majority of citizens became employees in state utilities (Alnuaim 2013). The public sector includes areas such as civil service employees and office attendants, teaching staff, judges and the medical sector. Unfortunately, no data is available on the PR sector or the media.

Saudi society is now formed of a modern middle classes, which were born after economic development. However, individuals have identities based on tribal and provincial affiliations (Alnuaim 2013). Saudi society thus has two groups: the modernists and the traditionalists, who fight to gain social power. Traditionalists want to preserve local values, while, on the other hand, the modernists wish society to change and be modernised. However, both groups recognise Islam as a vital social capital “that entails socio-political power and status” (Ibid. p.20).

According to Weir (2010), family ties are still strong, and Arab business people are aware of the links between trade and family relations. There is also a strong relationship between the merchant class and political leadership, which was formed during the rapid development. The state protected and reinforced the modern Saudi bourgeoisie and now this class has an influence on decisions regarding economic and financial interests (Alnuaim 2013). This perhaps explains the importance of interpersonal relations in the Arab business world. Weir (2010) has pointed out that the Arab commercial world is formed of commercial activities that function together with an implicit understanding of the interpersonal relations. Moreover, due to this fact, staff recruitment is subjective in Saudi organisations and is usually carried out on the basis of nepotism and the family name, and is not based on qualifications and experience (Weir 2010). For this reason, this thesis examines how these cultural features, such as family, influence PR practice, in terms of recruitment and what the consequences of this influence are.

In SA, family relationships are important in such a way that the family is seen as a source of protection and pride (Wilson and Graham 1994; Al-Garni 2000; Buchele 2008). All these social characteristics and behaviours come from the tribal way of life, because until the 1950s, half the population was nomadic and every individual belonged to a tribe (Buchele 2008). These tribes played a similar role to a state in that they were independent and had different customs. As the country is relatively new and was formed by uniting the tribes, people are still strongly related to their origins (Buchele 2008). In relation to this subject, Mohammed bin Salman, the Deputy Crown Prince stated:

People misunderstand our monarchy. It is not like Europe. It is a tribal form of monarchy, with many tribes and subtribes and regions connecting to the top. Their wishes and interests have to be taken into account. The king cannot just wake up and decide to do something. (Friedman 2015, p. 1)

The king must thus consult the leaders of the tribes when taking decisions (Al Kilani 2001). This type of decision taking is also prevalent in the business sector, as most businesses are run by families. Saudis feel the need to prove a lineal attachment to a historically recognised tribe, and families self-publish books of genealogy (Samin 2015). As stated previously, Arabic culture is a collective culture, which means society considers the collective interest to be more important than the individual interest. A socio-cultural research undertaken by Sanderson (2010) revealed that in a collective culture interdependence is more valued than independence. Moreover, individuals' thoughts, feelings and decisions are influenced by the group. If an individual highlights their own needs and feelings, it will disrupt the harmony of the group (Ibid.). The Saudi extended family unit is at the core of society in such a way that it has an economic and political function (Al-Garni 2000). For this reason, this thesis has chosen to examine this cultural concept in order to understand its influence on PR practice.

Researchers have found different cultural characteristics in the Arab societies. For example, the concept of the 'group think', which was derived from the work of the psychologist Irving Janis on research that studied the effects of stress on a group of American soldiers (Janis 1972). The study found that a group have a distorted view of their reality and they have a negative view of those who oppose them (Janis 1972). Another cultural feature is related to the fact that SA individuals are not open to criticism, nor do they criticise authorities, and they prefer not to challenge them. Research by Karolak and Guta (2015) attempted to show that the authorities are also not open to criticism and they do not communicate with employees. This research also stated that Saudis want to keep the group harmony and they will avoid criticising each other's work, even if it is constructive criticism, or even talk about their achievements in front of the group. This study revealed that Saudis tend to emphasize interdependence and networking and they rely on kin (Ibid.). The

individual thus grows in this collective group and, as in a collective society, the individual identifies with the group and becomes dependent on it (Sanderson 2010). Although this probably happens in any society, it could be argued that it happens in a particular way in SA.

However, the Karolak and Guta (2015) study may not reflect a cultural characteristic that can be applicable to all of the population, as the sample used in this research was small and was formed only of female students. It is also debatable how much interaction the female students had with authority outside the school. The participants would probably have limited the authority figures to teachers. If the sample had been more varied in terms of gender and age, and had been taken from a more diverse background, it would have been more representative. Moreover, the research uses Hofstede's dimensions to examine SA cultural factors which, as was discussed in the Introduction chapter, are not suitable for measuring culture. Courtright et al. (2011) have critiqued Hofstede's approach and state that this type of research makes an equivalence of a country with a culture, and that this type of comparison between countries may be useful only at a general level, but it is not suitable for researching how cultures communicate with each other on a micro level. Moreover, it cannot be applied to individuals from different cultures that interact in transcultural PR.

On the same subject, Arabic culture, Barakat (1993 cited in Hill et al. 1998) has found several cultural characteristics in Arab culture. For example, Barakat has found that Arab culture has a pyramidal class structure which is based on socio-economic structures, such as low class, middle class and high class, relations are patriarchal, group relations are important, there is a lack of civil society, and there is development that is moving to consumption rather than production. Further research has found that Saudi Arabian society's values are collectivism, hospitality, honour, loyalty, dignity, generosity, courage and self-respect (Nydell 1987; Patai 1983 cited in Feghali 1997). Among other values, researchers list the fact that the elderly are treated with respect by the young, and they have authority over family members

(Cordesman 2003). Modesty is another highly valued cultural feature and this is usually related to female physical appearance (Al-Mutair et al. 2014).

There are also cultural sensitivities which are not discussed in a social context, such as extra-marital affairs, or the use of drugs or enquiries about drinking habits. This is important for PR practitioners to know, because when they communicate with publics or create campaigns they need to know how to communicate without offending individuals (Al-Mutair et al. 2014). Gender separation is enforced by law, for example, hospitals and schools have separate sections for men and women (World Trade Press 2010). As well as cultural sensitivities, PR practitioners should be aware of the fact that Saudi individuals value their privacy (Luqmani et al. 1989). Saudis are less outgoing, and they spend their leisure time with their family and friends and interact less outside these circles (Luqmani et al. 1989; World Trade Press 2010). This cultural feature is also reflected in society. For example, businesses such as restaurants and parks have exclusive family sections in which to keep families private from outsiders (Buchele 2008).

Islam has changed the significance of the family, seeing its role as key to the propagation of faith and its role as being to contribute to society. Islam has also changed certain values, such as encouraging inter-tribal marriage in order to promote equality (Al-Ahmed 1987). Inter-tribal marriage was also encouraged by King Abdulaziz when he united the Kingdom, with the purpose of strengthening ties between tribes and creating a community (Al-Kilani 2001). Tribal connections have influenced all areas of society, including communications, and they are considered the most valuable form of currency in this area (Badran 2014). Buchele (2008, p. 57) stated that:

To this day, the loyalties of most Saudis are locked in concentric circles, the innermost circle being the family, followed by the tribe, then friends, then the nation, then the Muslim Ummah (community or nation), and finally everyone else. And these loyalties can take precedence over other commitments such as contractual obligations or political affiliations.

The concept of *Umma*, is further explained by Nevo (1998, p. 35) “Using Islam as its source of legitimacy, the nation (*Umma*) is more outside the state boundaries of Saudi Arabia than inside it”. This means that the sense of nation in SA is not seen in the Western sense, as a nation that has physical boundaries.

2.9 The influence of Islam on Saudi society

This thesis continues with an exploration of the literature on the Islamic religion and its influence on Saudi society because, as has been discussed, Islam is an important part of Saudi Arabia and is part of the Saudi identity. As this thesis explores the knowledge of practitioners within the cultural context of Saudi Arabia and the influence of culture and public communication factors on PR practice, an analysis of Islam will provide an understanding of Saudi culture and how it might affect PR practice.

The moral values promoted by the Islamic religion were also integrated into Saudi society’s moral code (Al-Ahmed 1987). Practising Islamic duties enhances an individual’s reputation, respect and appreciation. Islam is important in Saudi society, as Saudi culture, nation, civilisation, cultural heritage are traceable to the Islamic civilisation alone. Islam is a way of life and influences the politics, moral values, policy and law making, food and drink consumption, clothing patterns (Irani 1999). According to Al-Kilani (2001), Saudis feel also a religious connection to their land, due to the existence of Makkah and Medina, which serve all Muslims, and they feel that they have a duty to protect the two holy mosques. Moreover, the government of SA has taken the responsibility to make Islamic worship easy and safe to undertake. For example, both Shia and Sunni Muslims are allowed to participate in the Hajj pilgrimage in Makkah and Madinah (Rogerson 2010). Al-Kilani (2001, pp. 76-77) has stated that King Abdulaziz himself mentioned the importance of the two mosques:

This sacred land of ours makes it a duty binding on us that we should work hard to ensure all that serves its interests. We will do our utmost in this regard, until we have achieved all our goals and Muslims are assured of security and comfort. All those who come over to visit the places that

witnessed the revelation of God's message should enjoy equal rights and privileges and be assured of justice.

As has been demonstrated, the Saudi Arabian's everyday life practices are mixed with religious practices: "Before embarking on a task, from starting their car to sitting down to a meal, people invoke divine protection by muttering the first word of the Koran (Bismillah) in the name of God" (Buchele 2008, p.93). Religion is thus embedded in the conscience of the population. For example, Saudi Arabia's flag has a religious slogan (There is no deity except God, Muhammad is God's messenger) (Al-Kilani 2001). Islam influences daily life, education and work practices. For example, research by Nevo (1998) indicates that more than third of the material that is taught in schools is focused on Islam, and a third of Saudi students attend Islamic studies.

Many debates have surrounded the subject of Islam and modernity and how religion can adapt itself to modernity (Kenney 2014). As Kenney (2014) stated, modernity has come to Middle East mainly through Western colonialism, and the modern system was viewed as rich in scientific and technological development and has set up economic, cultural and political links. Lewis (2002 cited in Plateau 2008) has argued that religion creates issues in the economic development of countries. However, it is questionable if this argument could be applied to SA. The country has felt the effect of a number of terrorist attacks, such as those in Riyadh in 2003 (Plateau 2008). Fortunately, these conflicts did not have any influence on the economic and technological development of the country, which has progressed side by side with the Islamic religion. In fact, the country's economy is so strong due to its natural resources, such as oil, that it has determined many Muslims from other countries to migrate to SA in order to find work (Plateau 2008).

According to McCleary and Barro (2006), religious beliefs affect the economy of a country in a positive manner, because they promote values such as the work ethic, hospitality, charity and honesty. The thesis handles the emergence of ethical codes in relation to different religious backgrounds, taking into account that there may be conflicting approaches among them. Buck (2013) claimed that all religions, e.g.,

Buddhism, Christianity, Shinto and Sikhism, share the same values, for instance, justice, charity, integrity, good character, and a work effort, in order to contribute to the economy. 80 religious leaders recognised these shared values at the World Religions Summit in 2010 (Buck 2013). Weber (1930) also pointed out that religion can also have an influence on economic development, such as the ways in which Calvinist religious groups have contributed to the emergence of capitalism through the fact that capitalism seeks profit, and searching for profit is considered virtuous.

As has been previously discussed, religion is at the heart of Saudi society. This fact has launched many debates about how Saudi individuals are still able to adhere to old style teachings while living in a modern society, and whether the modern technologies and utilities go against Islamic beliefs and how this shapes today's Saudi Arabian's culture (Kenney 2014). This discussion about modernisation and change continues and is a fundamental issue for understanding politics, business and change in SA. This discussion helps in understanding whether the preservation of traditions and modernisation influence PR practitioners practice in SA.

Some scholars have considered that modernisation (such as practical science: medicine and engineering) is incompatible with Islam, and Al Kilani has suggested that these rigid scholars believe that inventions such as the radio and the car should be rejected by Islam, as adopting these innovations, the Islamic life would be affected negatively. Al-Kilani believes that religious leaders, but also society, were against modernity or against technical inventions coming from the West, because they associated these inventions with Western values, which were viewed as being non-Islamic (Al-Kilani 2001). Al-Kilani's however does not explain or detail what exactly Western values represent. Al-Kilani assumes that the population believed that Western values were only connected to materialism, and this motivated all of the individuals in the west and that this was the main cause of conflicts. Al-Kilani (Ibid.) generalises the Western values, not reflecting the diversity of Western ideologies and belief systems, including different religions. Some of the belief systems in the west are opposed to materialism and consumerism. One example is Naomi Klein's book (No Logo: taking aim at the brand bullies). The writer criticises neoliberal capitalist

society and the negative effects of corporation activities such as corporate censorship, the relocation of factories from Western countries to areas with no labour laws (Klein 2010). Other examples are Closson (2001) and Jetahni (2006) who view consumerism in the United States as negative, because individuals tend to choose material goods as the centre of their life and this is a threat to Christian values (Closson 2001).

Although certain scholars were against Western inventions because they were associated with Western values, there were also progressive scholars, such as Al-Afghani, who considered that true Islam is not against science (Kenney 2014). The author has stated that science and Islam complement each other, and whoever is against science is also against Islam. It must be mentioned the historical importance of Muslim culture to the development of Western scientific knowledge. For example, while the Middle Ages in Europe was viewed as a dark period in the history of Europe, in the Middle East it was a period of prosperity and technological advances. During what was called the Golden Age, between 8th century and 13th century, Islamic scholars have made advancements in medicine that influenced medicine practice in Europe, developments were done in the pharmacology field, and several advances were also made in technology, architecture and arts (Falagas et al. 2006). The developments in pharmacology were particularly influential in Europe for hundreds of years. For example, terms such as alcohol, alkali, drug are of Arabic origin. As well, several libraries and many hospitals and mobile hospital units were established in Baghdad, Cairo and in Spain. Other developments were also done in agriculture, such as developing underground channels for irrigation and waterwheels (Falagas et al. 2006).

The discoveries were made in the Arabian Peninsula, after prophet Mohammed united the Arab tribes through the Islamic religion (Falagas et al. 2006). The Islamic empire covered large parts of North Africa, Central Asia and southern Europe. Several scientific centres were created in Spain and Baghdad (Falagas et al. 2006). Due to the fact that previous discoveries were made by Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, diverse scientist as well as translators were brought together in the science

centres to work towards scientific developments in science, medicine and technology. According to Atiyeh and Hayes (1992) scientist followed closely the Islamic guidelines when searching for knowledge. Scientists communicated easily due to sharing Arabic language and translations.

Kenny (2014) stated that scholars had to fight the *Ulema*, who rejected everything that originated from the Western world, including science, and who wanted to adopt only science invented by Islamic researchers. PR practice was also introduced late to this area for several reasons, such as the lack of large business organisations and of modern management in institutions, which were set up later due to the contact with Western countries.

Afghani considered that Islam had two enemies, the colonial powers that occupied the countries and the rigid traditionalists, who opposed the modernisation of Islamic countries. It was also pointed out that when the Kingdom started to modernise, there were difficult stages in the development when King Abdulaziz had to organise debates about blending modernity and religion (Al-Kilani 2001). Despite the fact that, in the past, Western values were considered immoral, Islam has still embraced modernism. For example, cyberspace is used for spreading Islamic knowledge. The sermons of scholars are available online, electronic *Fatwas* are created specially to guide the cyber world, and Islamic applications with *Qu'ran* recitations and readings are available online (Bunt 2014). However, even though Islam has embraced modern technology, it can still influence how messages are transmitted. In SA, religious quotes are especially used during and after the holy month of Ramadan. For example, adverts show families who gather around food or they integrate messages reminding people about the month of faith (Hammond 2007, pp.117-118) Hammond describes other examples of religious usage:

For example, Saudi Telecom ran ads in October 2006 that showed a man at prayers in a mosque whose mobile phone goes off with an Arab pop ditty as its ring tone. The slogan comes up: Be humble in prayer, delay phone calls. One Malaysian saloon car, the Proton, was touted as the number one Islamic car in the market.

Advertising in Saudi Arabia is undertaken by respecting three sets of Qu'ranic messages. This means, first of all, that alcohol, gambling, idol worship and immodest clothes will not be promoted. Additionally, adverts that are considered deceptive, from a religious point of view, are forbidden. For example, companies are not allowed to not mislead customers with false advertising facts (Luqmani et al. 1989). Secondly, religious duties must be respected. No adverts or promotions will therefore be transmitted during prayer times; adverts will not show the disrespect of children towards parents. Thirdly, it is recommended that advertisers use religious quotes in adverts. Successful adverts in Saudi Arabia have been proved to be those that have integrated Arab culture. For example, adverts that have used Arabic proverbs, such as "choose your companion carefully before you travel", or that have used Arabic architecture and calligraphy (Luqmani et al. 1989). It is important to add that Luqmani et al. (1989) have pointed to a lack of clear guidelines for advertisements and, for this reason, companies use a type of self-censorship and they avoid creating provocative commercials. While there are a number of sources that indicate the use of religion in adverts and self-censorship, there is a lack of studies that suggest the involvement of religion in PR practice. One of the aims of this research is thus to consider whether Islamic quotes are used in PR practice and what its consequences are.

Several Islamic reformers: Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-97), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-98), pointed out the importance of adopting science and of participating in the modern world. The Islamic reformers wanted to reconnect Muslims with their Islamic origins and also to encourage them to study sciences and Western languages, at the same time rejecting those Western cultural values that conflicted with Islamic values, meanwhile staying obedient to Islam (Kenney 2014). It is important to state that Arab attitudes towards Western cultures and values have changed in the last decade. For example, a survey taken in Arab countries in 2002 asked respondents their view on Western culture (The Gallup Poll 2002). The results showed that Arab individuals believed Western individuals lead immoral lifestyles, have weak family values and that Western countries do not respect Arabic and Islamic values. Another survey suggested that the Western

population is selfish, greedy, arrogant, violent and immoral (Pew Research Center 2006). The respondents said that Western countries' only positive value was their technical development and scientific expertise (The Gallup Poll 2002). The polls did not, however, point out why Arabs had these beliefs. It could be argued that perhaps, because their moral values are influenced by Islam, the individuals may believe that individuals from Western countries have a different set of values. It could also be argued that Western and Muslim countries have both publicly used stereotypes that have determined political and cultural tensions between Western and Muslim countries and their values. These might have had an influence on people's views (Shadid and Koningsveld 2002).

Lewis (2002) points out that the difference between Islam and the west is that patriotism and nationalism in Western countries is related to ethnicity and language, while, in Muslim countries, identity is related to religion. As history shows, when occupied Muslim countries revolted against Western rulers, they were motivated by religion. The visible sources of wealth in Western countries were military, economic and political. According to Lewis (Ibid.), Muslims saw that the wealth of Western countries, particularly Europe, came from industry.

In an examination of historical memoirs, Lewis (Ibid.) found that Islamic visitors to Western countries noted the immodesty of Western women. It is noted that, in Islam, men and women are required to cover parts of their bodies and to wear loose clothes in public (Sobh and Belk 2011). In return, the Western population also has a negative view of the Middle Eastern population, and the general view is of people who threaten the peace of the Western population and that shows Arab women as being exploited and controlled by men (Slade 1981; Ahmed 1982). Lewis (2002) noted the reluctance of the Middle East to accept Western science, even though the Islamic civilisation contributed a great deal to science in the Middle Ages. Lewis noted that:

They were willing enough to accept the products of infidel science in warfare and medicine, where they could make the difference between victory and defeat, between life and death. But the underlying philosophy and the socio-political context of these scientific achievements proved more difficult to accept or even to recognise. (Ibid., p. 81)

Al-Kilani (2001) states that materialism was also the reason that the west colonised Eastern nations. Although these studies tend to show the opposition of Muslim views towards Western values, a more recent survey, taken in 2014, shows that Arab views towards Western culture and values have changed positively. The research shows that the majority of Saudis have embraced Western cultural values, they had a positive attitude towards Western culture and they were predisposed to interact favourably with westerners (Hagler 2014).

Islam is a way of life, it influences politics, moral values, laws and even advertising. Apart from the fact that religion is part of everyday life, Saudi citizens also see it as a part of their identity. This raises questions about Saudi identity and how Saudis view themselves compared to the rest of the world. It is relevant to examine the way religion influences Saudi identity, in order to understand Saudi culture and how it can influence every day PR practice.

2.10 Saudi Arabian identity: Nation, Islam and globalisation

This section will discuss Muslim identity and national identity in SA. It is important to note that the concept of 'Muslim identity' in this thesis does not refer to any Muslim individual from any Muslim country. As Moghadam and Mitra (2014) noted, the Islamic world is diverse, as it is comprised of diverse political governments, has different histories and different practices, while, at the same time, having common cultural values. Sedgwick (2014) noted that it is a methodological error to explain what a Muslim person does in terms of Islam. At this point, it is important to discuss Muslim identity, because Saudi individuals have a dual sense of identity. One element is in being a Muslim, and another is being Saudi.

Before Arab countries were formed in the last century, individuals used to live in tribes, thus forming close-knit communities. When countries formed, this idea of country and nation determined an identity for the individual, who now belonged to a nation (Kenney 2014). However, there was no idea of nationalism as it is viewed in Europe. Kenney (2014) believes that Muslims see the idea of nationalism as being a

false political ideology. According to Kenney (2014), this idea is foreign to Muslim history and culture. Most Muslims found identity in Islam. This is where they found a community and this is when they saw Islam as being compatible with nationalism, which refers to a common land, language, common history and religious culture (Kenney 2014).

It is important, here, to see the difference between nationalism and tribalism. The sociologist Gellner (2008) has argued against conventional definitions of nationalism, first of all understanding the nation through the history of individual nations, and, secondly nationalism was viewed as being a modern doctrine that generated nationalist feelings. Gellner believed that nationalism is a function of modernity. When looking at the concepts of tribalism and nationalism, (Gellner 2008) stated:

Nationalisms are simply those tribalisms, or for that matter any other kind of group, which through luck, effort or circumstance succeed in becoming an effective force under modern circumstances. They are only identifiable ex post factum. Tribalism never prospers, for when it does, everyone will respect it as a true nationalism, and no one will dare call it tribalism. (Gellner 2008 p.84)

Oudat and Alshboul (2010) have also looked at the relationship between tribalism and nationalism in the state of Jordan, and they have noted a confusion at the national levels about how the state system must work. Moreover, in this country, tribalism is more important than nationalism, the state encourages the loyalties of tribes, and tribes are incorporated into the state structure and are the foundation on which the government is based.

As can be seen, tribalism and nationalism are part of the individual's identity. However, there are several other factors that have contributed to the individual's identity. One of these factors is globalisation. Sedgwick (2014) points out that Muslim popular culture differs today compared to its earlier models, and this is due to modernisation and globalisation. Globalisation has meant that Muslims were affected by ideas from the west and they also brought ideas to the west. However,

despite globalisation, popular culture remained local and connected with Islam. For example, in Tunisia, there are still traditions that are followed, such as men wearing flowers behind their ears (Sedgwick 2014).

Traditions were therefore preserved, despite globalisation and international influence. Even though traditions were preserved, certain aspects of Saudi society have changed due to the fact that SA is connected economically, technologically and politically to other countries. For example, a study by Bhuian et al. (2001) reveals that Saudis have become part of a Western style consumer society. Moreover, the culture has been influenced by exposure to Western media, literature and entertainment, and this has determined Saudis to be aware when businesses do not respect their consumer rights. The Western influence may also have been determined by the fact that the United States has invested heavily in the trade sector in Saudi Arabia, as the United States relies heavily on acquiring oil from Saudi Arabia (Shawesh 2016). Research by Al-Khadab (2005) has also discussed the impact of foreign TV channels on Saudi values, pointing to the positive effects on the younger generation in terms of family, and the negative influence in relation to violent behaviour (Al-Khadab 2005). Moreover, other effects are the weakening of parental authority and the influence over family members, changing clothing styles to resemble Western clothes, the usage of English words in communication (Zamil 2013). Aside from Western economic trading, SA has strong links with the regional Gulf countries, such as Bahrain, the Emirates and Oman. The common factor between these countries, besides their similar cultures and religion, is that they are oil based economies.

A rise or fall in oil prices affects economic growth and thus their economies influence the economic growth in the Middle East (Ilahi and Shendy 2008; Al-Mawali 2015). Moreover, the Gulf countries have established a Gulf Common market that has allowed all of the citizens of the Gulf countries to work, live and invest in each of these six countries. Moreover, countries such as SA, the Emirates and Kuwait, have invested in countries such as Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia, in an effort to create economic prosperity in the area (Li 2009). The Gulf countries have

also encouraged dialogue between the religions of the world in an effort to improve the image of Muslims (Li 2009). Another common factor between these countries is that because of their strong economies, the Gulf countries' governments have ensured their citizens jobs in the public sector and, for this reason, the majority of their citizens work in the public sector, although the private sector has a high demand for specialists (Lindsey 2015).

Tomlinson (2003) believes that globalisation has produced the fear among individuals that it might destroy cultural identities, and that all nations will become the victims of a consumerised and westernised society. Research confirms that globalisation has influenced certain cultures more than others, and that developing countries have been affected more in this process (Tomlinson 2003; Hassi and Storti 2012). Tomlinson (2003) has challenged the idea that globalisation has destroyed or negatively affected cultural identity and stated that cultural identity has proliferated. For example, countries have undertaken cultural efforts in order to connect their population to their local identity (Tomlinson 2003). It could be argued thus, that the identity of collective societies, such as the Saudi one, was not affected and perhaps even made the society more aware of its Muslim and Saudi identity. In the Middle East, and also in SA, although there have been reported changes in technology, education and lifestyle due to Western influence, there has also been a strong response to globalisation, through reinforcing conservatism and a strong will to maintain traditions (Posusney and Doumato 2003). According to Tomlinson (2003), cultural identity was created by globalisation, because globalisation has forced the institutional features of modernity, such as the concept of nationality, on all cultures.

Other researchers have pointed out that globalisation has produced cultural trends, such as cultural differentiation and cultural convergence (Hassi and Storti 2012). The authors have agreed that globalisation meant also the influence of cultures on other ones, particularly the influence of Western cultures, however, they pointed out that globalisation has in certain circumstances determined diversity in the world (Hassi and Storti 2012). For example, countries that have been under colonisation had some of their diversity reduced, however, after liberation, different cultures arose and

cultural diversification was encouraged (Hassi and Storti 2012). Globalisation brought new ideas that were developed by the social sciences, such as society, individuality, social justice, which were adopted and viewed as being Islamic, even though these concepts were not found in the old religious texts, because the concept did not exist then (Sedgwick 2014). In conclusion, Muslim popular culture today is a mix of old, new, local and global, Islamic religious elements and also non-religious elements (Sedgwick 2014).

2.11 Foreign workers in Saudi Arabia

It is important to note that the Saudi population has preserved its culture despite the fact that the country has a rich diversity of cultures. In this area there is a large number of immigrants who work for families, which means there is a mixture of cultures, languages and also religions (Nazzal 2015). As pointed out earlier, culture is not a settled set of characteristics but is a dynamic process of continuity, change and adaptation. The fact that 30 percent of the population is formed of migrants could have an impact on culture, economy and everyday life (Arab News 2015). PR practitioners need to take this into consideration when organising campaigns and also in their communications. It is vital to examine how immigrants affect SA culture.

According to the General Authority for Statistics (2016), the number of immigrants who work in SA is 11,660,998. The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Labour (2013) stated that recruitment visas issued by nationality for each continent for the year 2013 were showing that the Asian nationalities, such as Indians, Pakistanis, Afghanis, Bangladeshis, Nepalese, Indonesians and Filipinos receive the majority of the visas. There were 708,291 visas, 69.5 percent of the total number of visas issued for the rest of the nationalities of all the continents, and these immigrants usually work in industrial construction (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Labour 2013). Several researchers believe that the mixture of cultures happened due to globalisation, as local families can afford to hire domestic help, such as drivers or servants (Al Rogy 2007; Zacharias 2013; Nazzal 2015). It was pointed out that many of these domestic foreign helpers do not speak Arabic and have a different cultural background, with possibly anti-Islamic values, but are involved in raising their children. The authors

believe that the lack of the Arabic language and the mix of cultures is affecting the national identity, cultural values and causing a deterioration in the language.

While these researchers point out that there may be a cultural influence from the immigrant cultures, there is no actual research that has examined the effects of immigration on local culture in the longer term and the decreasing use of Arabic language. As has been pointed out, there is concern over the usage of English rather than Arabic, however, recent research shows that, in contrast to opinion, individuals use more Arabic than English when communicating online (Dennis et al. 2015). For example, research shows that 55 percent of internet searches are made in Arabic, but only three percent of online content is in Arabic (Cherrayil 2015). Additionally, despite the high use of technologies of communication in the Middle East by the population, business practice does not seem to acknowledge its existence and the advantages of using the Arabic language (Weir 2010). While the high usage of technologies of communication has affected the population, there is a more fundamental feature that has influenced the population and that is the Egyptian influence over the Saudi educational system.

2.12 Saudi Arabian educational system and the Egyptian influence

It is not only religion and development that have affected Saudi society but also education has had an important role. It is important to discuss education because this thesis discusses PR practice in SA and examines what knowledge PR practitioners possess. It looks into how PR is taught in universities, how PR practitioners are trained, and how PR has been developed by educational institutions and PR associations. This is done with the purpose of understanding what knowledge PR practitioners use in their practice and how this knowledge helps them when interacting with media and the local culture. This section therefore examines the SA educational system, Egyptian influence on it, and its development.

As far as the SA educational system is concerned, it is important to note that it has had a strong Egyptian influence. The strong Egyptian influence is due to the fact that in the early 20th century, when the Kingdom was formed and public education began,

there was a shortage of qualified Saudi teachers and the government hired Egyptians and adopted an Egyptian curriculum and education system (Wiseman et al. 2008). Additionally, starting in 1935, SA students were sent to study abroad at the government's expense, mainly in Egypt to study education, agriculture, medicine and *Shariah* justice. In 1942, the number of students sent abroad increased, and the government started to send students to different destinations, including the United States, Europe, Japan, China, Australia, Canada and South Korea. The number of students studying abroad has increased over the years, as official numbers show. For example, in 2005 there were 9,241 individuals who graduated with a bachelor's degree abroad, and in 2011 there were 46,438 individuals with a bachelor's degree (Ministry of Higher Education 2016).

According to Al-Ahmed (1987), the adoption of the Egyptian curriculum was criticised by Algosaibi, the Saudi Minister of Labour, who stated that the Egyptian curriculum is not suited to Saudi culture because the Egyptian school prepares students to be white collar workers and what SA needed at that time, in the 1980s, was blue collar workers to build the country. For this reason, SA had to bring in workers from other countries and is currently heavily relying on them. Al-Ahmed (1987) also pointed out that the local population has a negative view of worker jobs and that individuals prefer to be unemployed rather than work in menial jobs, as this is viewed as showing a low social status.

Education has therefore had an influence on Saudis, from the Egyptian style of education to travelling abroad to study. As is apparent from the analysis, Saudis have been taught in different styles, by foreign educators, which means it might have not been suitable to their culture. This probably has had an effect on how all subjects, including PR, were taught. After providing an examination of the literature regarding public communication, culture, and education in order to understand the context in which PR practitioners work, it is necessary to examine the literature on the development of the public relations field in the Middle Eastern area and Saudi Arabia. In the following sections, the thesis examines the current literature on public relations in the Middle East, including Egypt, Oman, the Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

2.13 Development of the public relations field in the Middle Eastern area

The following sections focus on the development of PR in the Middle East, particularly on the current situation of PR in Egypt, Oman, the Emirates and SA. It is important to look at the situation of PR in the Middle Eastern area, as these countries practise similar models of PR (Algalab 2011). According to Badran (2014), PR activity was introduced to the area by the foreign oil companies in the 1950s and, due to development, advertising companies started to appear and these agencies opened PR units, e.g., Fortune Promoseven, Intermarkets and Gulf Public Relations in Bahrain. In the 1970s and 1980s the advertising sector developed to international standards due to the development of local economies, some local agencies became part of international advertising companies. PR thus became a part of the advertising industry. Abu Osbaa (1998) agreed that PR, as a concept, was introduced by foreign companies and that businesses have started to view PR as important in the last 30 years because private businesses and also public institutions began to set up specialist units and foreign companies opened branches in the area. Similarly, John (2009) also attributed the development of PR to high financial investments:

Public relations, as an industry, took concrete shape in the beginning of the new millennium, led principally by the opening of Dubai Media City, a free zone dedicated to media. This eased up the process of setting up firms and operating with more professionalism. It also came at the right time with much of the Gulf region looking at huge infrastructure investments and foreign collaborations or acquisitions. This made PR almost mandatory for the big local business entities. Over the past years, the lead taken by Dubai in public relations has expanded to other countries in the Gulf region and the Middle East. (John 2009, pp. 1-2)

Researchers who have studied the beginning of PR in the Middle East seem to point to common factors: that PR was introduced by foreign companies and, at the same time, they agree that many PR departments do not perform PR duties (Alanazi1996; Abu Osbaa 1998; John 2009). However, there is no research to indicate why certain companies practise PR and why, for some practitioners and companies, the term PR is vague. For example, a survey of PR practitioners working at 65 foreign and local companies in the Emirates shows that PR practitioners working for foreign

companies understood PR practice, while PR officers working for local and public organisations misunderstood the term (Creedon et al. 1995). Additionally, the term PR was confused with the term propaganda. This is explained by the fact that PR was used by certain governments, such as Egypt, for propaganda purposes, and for this reason PR is viewed as being part of the propaganda (Ayyad and Farouk 2014).

Propaganda and PR are not unique to these regions of the world, however, the terms are often confused. Generally, there also seems to be a difficulty in distinguishing propaganda from PR at a conceptual level. Critics of public relations often compare it to propaganda.

Fawkes and Moloney (2008) state that public relations is confused with propaganda because the two terms have been used interchangeably during the second World War. Jowett and O'Donnell (2006) defined propaganda as a strategy of communication in which information is presented in a favourable light for an individual or political group's self-interest. In an effort to distinguish between socially legitimate and illegitimate use of persuasion Jowett and O'Donnell (2006) distinguished between three types of propaganda such as white, grey and black propaganda. White propaganda was defined as factual correctness and transparency of sources. However, it is still considered propaganda because it tries to persuade the audience that the transmitter of the information is positive and has a certain political message that is beneficial. This type of propaganda is used to construct credibility with the target audience. Black propaganda on the other hand has a hidden source and its purpose is to promote false information with the purpose of deceit. Grey propaganda usually has a source that cannot be identified and it is not clear if the information provided is true.

PR scholars Fawkes and Moloney (2008) consider PR equal to weak propaganda. They argue that most practitioners will not agree with this statement because practitioners try to keep their distance from persuasion. The authors state that there is no symmetry in communication as Grunig's theory states, but in a communication relationship the communication is between the dominant and the subordinate. The

authors point out that there are strong connections between propaganda manipulation and emotional messages and that public relations is “persuasion in the interests of the message sender, based on selected facts and emotions; that it is consistent with attenuated and existing forms of market-orientated, liberal democracies with their social base of intense and accelerating pluralism” (Fawkes and Moloney 2008, p.209). Fawkes and Moloney (2008) also state that those who criticise public relations are examining it from a sociological perspective and they do not offer solutions to the problems.

The concept of propaganda was also discussed by L’Etang (2006), who pointed out that media sociologists and journalists claim they are morally superior to PR practitioners when, in fact, their conceptual relationship is subtler. The journalists and media sociologists have shown hostility towards the concept and practice of PR and the consequences have affected both the image of PR and its practice and education (L’Etang 2006). Additionally, in a critical study that used Habermas theoretical approach, Weaver et al. (2006) drew attention to the fact that PR is still viewed as “little more than an industry of propaganda and spin that trades in lies and deceit” (Weaver et al. p.7, 2006). Weaver et al. (2006) claims that this perception of PR harms the industry and affects its development, especially given the fact that a large part of the PR industry is dedicated to offering legitimate information and it supports democratic organisations, non-governmental organisations and activists. It must be noted, however, that Weaver et al.’s (2006), L’Etang’s (2006) and Jowett and O’Donnell’s (2006) views are culturally specific to Western countries, partly to the UK, and these are related to Western changing employment practices, the economics of media production, and technological change. These definitions of propaganda may not be suitable for the country of SA.

While some researchers have attempted to explain the differences between PR and propaganda, research on Arab media has shown that the terms are still confused, especially given the fact that the media have been used by some Arab governments for political propaganda (Mellor et al. 2011). This would suggest that the PR departments’ main duties in the government are to promote the political agenda.

However, research suggests PR in Arab countries is underdeveloped and has duties other than promoting political agendas (Kirat 2005). Researchers have pointed out that PR departments in Arab countries are tied to governmental institutions and overall their practice is influenced by the lack of freedom of speech, the absence of an active public voice, government censorship and control of the media and the internet (Al-Enad 1990; Kirat 2005; Kirat 2006; Gaither and Curtin 2007; Bekhit 2009). Moreover, PR in Asia is related more to sales and marketing, and it is focused on social relations, if compared to the US, where it is seen as a strategic management function (Curtin and Gaither 2007).

However, some researchers consider that there has been a slight development in PR in the Middle East. For example, Pearce (2008) stated that, in the 1980s, there were two PR agencies in the region, now there are over 100 just in the UAE. Between 2006 and 2010 there was an increase of 63 percent in the number of PR agencies (Abdelhay 2014). The growing number of PR agencies (Pearce 2008) is due to the fact that there is an increasing number of new companies that hire PR agencies. Due to economic growth, rising consumerism and continuous investment in construction and development, many international companies are encouraged to invest, thus they hire PR agencies (Assad 2008; Pearce 2008). Companies which used to hire PR only for media relations have also started to use other PR services, such as CSR (Pearce 2008).

In SA, government institutions have noticed the importance of PR departments and the government decided, in the 1970s, to establish PR departments at government institutions, such as ministries and higher education institutions. 81.7 percent of the institutions have thus established PR departments (Pearce 2008). Researchers are optimistic about the future of PR in the area, in spite of the current situation, which is characterised by government censorship and the absence of a public voice. The optimism is supported by the fact that the PR industry is developing fast. For example, in 2006, the PR industry in SA was evaluated at 25 million dollars a year, while in 2008 it reached 100 million dollars (Pearce 2008).

Regarding public communication, research by BuMetea (2013) shows that the governments in the Arabian Gulf area have a strong influence on the local press, and thus the media give more importance to political news or news concerning political leaders. Additionally, governments use certain frameworks in their messages to attract the public. For example, Seib (2013) noted that the messages will be ignored by the population if religious references are not used in the communication. Regarding political communication, Ayish (2002) and BuMetea (2013) have agreed that in the Arab world there are three political communication patterns: a traditional government controlled media model, and due to developments in the media in the area, two new patterns have appeared: the reformist government pattern, and the liberal commercial pattern.

Despite the fact that the researchers suggest that the industry is slowly developing, the term 'public relations' is still characterised by protocol activities and secretarial duties, such as following up paperwork from the government. PR officers are not engaged in activities such as campaigning and communicating with the press, and therefore there is no communication bridge between companies, institutions and publics or between the departments of a company (Badran 2014). It is important to note that PR departments are not informed about the companies' activities or events and therefore PR departments cannot offer any information to the public (Algalab 2011; Al-Abdulkarem 2013). Additionally, PR departments suffer from a lack of PR experts, which leads to weak media performance, due to unclear media strategy. Additionally, it is important to note that, in the Middle East, the government sector owns 80 percent of the economy and PR is still practised, even though it is not recognised as a vital factor in social economic life (Algalab 2011).

Researchers have found three different PR models that are practised in Arab countries. Algalab (2011) has described all three. First, the hail and farewell model, which means PR activities focus on protocol activities, such as receiving guests, managing accommodation and organising luncheons (Badran 2014). This type of activity promotes the PR image as a hospitality department in the Arab world. Secondly, the government transaction model, which implies services, such as

renewing visas and licenses for the management. Thirdly, the media coverage department model, which is concerned with media relations, but only those related to activities performed by the government. The three PR models show that routine PR practice in SA tends to be different from Western PR practice. The key difference here is that Western PR practice has access to management and can influence management decisions, while PR in SA does not (Badran 2014).

This section has focused on examining the current situation of PR in the Middle East with the purpose of understanding the contextual factors and characteristics that influence PR, such as the narrow technical duties of PR practitioners in the Arab countries, the influence of government over the development of PR, the way PR is misunderstood by society, businesses and PR practitioners. Given the fact that the Middle East includes 16 countries of different cultures and political situations, the thesis now moves on to discuss the situation of PR in the Arabian Gulf countries, such as the Emirates, Oman and SA, and will also include an analysis of Egypt. It is important to view PR in Egypt because Egypt has had a major influence in the development of the Saudi Arabian educational system and, as several studies show, a significant percentage of PR practitioners who practise in SA are foreign nationals, including Egyptians (Al-Rashed 2010).

2.14 Public relations in Egypt, the Emirates and Oman

Egypt, Oman and the Emirates share the same PR issues, although their economic, political and media context differs slightly. For example, in Egypt, this context has affected the practice of PR (Ayyad and Farouk 2014). At the moment, the media are owned and controlled by the government, and PR is represented negatively in the media (Keenan 2011). In Egypt, access to media and information is restricted due to high illiteracy and poverty, and this context implicitly affects the PR industry. Egyptian media suffers from censorship, despite the fact that there are laws that encourage freedom of speech (Abdullah 2014). Moreover, journalists are accustomed to asking for financial favours in exchange for PR material being published and PR practitioners are not respected by journalists because practitioners do not offer useful or good quality written material. On the other hand, Keenan (2011) implies that PR is

changing for the better, thanks to the continuous privatisation and development that will bring in more investors. While Keenan (2011) regards the future of PR in a positive manner, it must be taken into account that this study was undertaken before the Egyptian civil unrest that affected the area. This event has brought economic instability and thus the future of PR in the area is unclear.

On the other hand, PR in the Emirates and Oman has a more positive image (Walters 2011; Ikram 2015). In the Emirates, PR campaigns have successfully promoted the image of a welcoming business environment (Walters 2011). Although Qerat (2008 cited in Algalab 2011) stated that PR is more developed than in the nearby Gulf countries, PR functions in the Emirates focus on protocol and administration, has a low budget, and lack of qualified PR practitioners. Evidence from a study undertaken by Qerat in 2008 suggests that there is no correlation between what is taught and real practice, there is no proper training as those who teach PR in universities are experts in media or marketing, and their writing skills are considered unsatisfactory (Algalab 2011). While PR in the Emirates seemed to be the most developed in the Arab Gulf area, it thus still suffers from several issues, for instance it is often limited to protocol and lack of research.

In the Emirates and Oman, the main problem that PR departments face is that the management misunderstands the role of PR in a company, the activity of PR departments in companies is not focused on PR duties, but on protocol (Shezawi 2008 cited in Algalab 2011). Consequently, PR departments are not awarded with a proper budget, there is a lack of PR specialists, a lack of research, the PR departments are neither clearly defined nor separated from other departments in the company, which means they also undertake administration and secretarial tasks for other departments. There is insufficient internal communication and collaboration between PR departments and the other departments and there is a lack of communication between PR and management (Abdelhay 2014). Moreover, practitioners are not involved in PR activities, such as campaigns, and they do not engage in media relations, do not send press releases, do not organise press

conferences, and practitioners are not involved in decision making relating to the planning and development of the institution (Hilmi and Emenyeonu 2014).

2.15 Saudi Arabia public relations practice: activities, practitioners, sites of work

The proceeding section explores specific empirical studies into PR in SA, looking at the way PR is understood in this area, what duties PR practitioners fulfil, their relationship with the media, and the obstacles that they meet in their work.

SA is part of the Arabian Gulf and shares similar PR issues with its neighbouring countries. Research has pointed out a mixture of positive and negative views of PR in SA. Alanazi (2013) stated that PR in this area is developing at a fast pace, however, at the same time, it meets many obstacles that stand in its way. These obstacles generally come from the organisations' management, who offer limited support, and who rarely allow practitioners to participate in decision making and also give the PR department a limited budget (Alanazi 2013). There are several reasons why this behaviour is practised. As pointed out previously, businesses in SA are influenced by the local culture, thus businesses are led in a hierarchical way and decisions go through a chain of command (Mazawi 2005; Buchele 2008). This would explain why practitioners do not participate in decision making.

According to Alanazi (2011), the main PR practitioners' role is building social relationships and undertaking protocol duties. It must be pointed out that Alanazi (Ibid.) does not fully explain why PR practitioners undertake these duties and what the term "protocol duties" entails. Understanding what this term means and what the PR practices entail is part of the function of the thesis.

Alanazi (Ibid.) also revealed that PR departments are given insufficient budgets, scientific findings are not used by PR practitioners, and there is an overlap between PR departments and other departments in the organisation (Margalani 1991 cited in Al-Anazi 2011; Active PR 2012; Alanazi 2013). The research has also pointed out practitioners undertake secondary activities, such as developing strategies for solving

PR problems, conducting research or communicating with publics. Minor attention is given to technical duties, such as writing speeches, press releases, organising conferences, producing audio and visual materials, promoting minor events and praising their manager's personal achievements (Alanazi 2011).

According to Active PR (2012), companies in SA express a need and desire to use PR, however, some government departments still do not undertake PR strategies and plans and PR departments are still only partially developed, for example, while they do send out press releases, there is no strategy for media coverage, and media relations tactics, such as media briefings, are rarely used. Studies show the difficulties relating to PR in Arabic countries, such as a lack of appreciation for the role of PR, the internal and external public's view of the PR occupation as a secondary and unproductive activity (Margalani 1991 cited in Al-Anazi 2011). Moreover, research suggests that when PR practitioners are hired, they are not required to present a certificate in PR and this means individuals that have no PR educational background are hired in PR positions (Margalani 1991 cited in Al-Anazi 2011). The fact that unqualified PR practitioners are hired may be because there are strong connections between family and trade and, because of this, Saudi organisations hire staff on the basis of nepotism and not of qualifications or experience (Weir 2010). However, it must be pointed out there is lack of research that shows that unqualified PR practitioners are hired due to nepotism. This thesis thus also aims to examine the influence of culture on PR practice, looking at how the concepts of family and tribe may influence employment and the overall effect on PR in SA.

Additional research on PR in the area shows more obstacles that PR practitioners face. Al-Fehad (1998) and Al-Qahtani (2004) studies revealed that PR practitioners in the government institutions suffer from a low level of PR capability and a lack of the technical and organisational potential with which to perform crisis management. The study showed the main barriers that reduce the ability of PR to face the crisis. The barriers consist in the facts that higher management does not allow PR departments to manage crisis, and PR departments do not participate in decision

making. Additionally, there is a non-availability of information, no duties are specified, no responsibility is given to staff, there is a lack of trained PR practitioners, and it was stated that it is unusual for a PR department to use PR knowledge (Al-Fehad 1998; Al-Qahtani 2004). Another research on PR practice in SA shows that when companies were confronted with a PR crisis, they did not allow their own PR departments to handle it. Moreover 56.3 percent of companies relied on higher management to solve crises and 40 percent of companies chose to hire an external PR consultant (Al-Jaralh 2011). Although the literature suggests that PR in SA is confronted with many obstacles, the latest research shows that the number of PR companies in SA is increasing, and currently there are over 219 local, regional and also international agencies (Saudi Arabia Business Directory 2016). The international agencies are branches of PR companies, such as Burson-Marsteller, Hill Knowlton Strategies, Ketchum and MEMAC Ogilvy (PR Week 2014). Moreover, a study in SA indicates that over 92 percent of companies have PR departments (Arab News 2013a).

While many studies indicate that PR practitioners' duties are related to administration, the General Authority for Statistics (2016) in Saudi Arabia has also indicated that public relations is under the category of administration. However, official figures on the occupation of PR are not available. This shows that, officially, public relations, as an occupation, does not exist for the purpose of national statistics and it is subsumed into a larger category, which indicates that it is neither considered important nor big enough to be treated separately.

An official report from the Council of Ministers in SA points to a clearer image of Saudi PR practice. In 2012, the Ministry asked government departments and organisations to assign spokesmen who would help the media with the information they needed (Active PR 2012). Before this, PR was seen as private, and by governmental companies it was seen more as a luxury than as a necessity (Active PR 2012). The fact that institutions became aware of the importance of PR also shows that they are aware that the SA society is more active in communication, as the population is very active on the internet (Lipman 2012; Muhammad 2013).

Alanazi (2013) also believes that PR in SA is characterised by the misunderstanding of the role of PR. As mentioned previously, the role of PR is mainly for carrying out protocol duties and this means that perhaps companies believe the PR department's main duties are related to protocol. This belief might come from the culture as it has been revealed that most businesses in SA are family businesses and that there is a strong link between family and trade (Weir 2010). This means that family businesses work together as they trust each other and they rely on networking when doing business (Karolak and Guta 2015). Moreover, the way business is practised is through building social relationships first, and then doing the actual business (Iles et al. 2012). This might explain why there is a strong reliance on protocol and why PR is used for this task.

Yeomans (2010) has pointed out that certain occupations, such as journalists, use these social factors to create and maintain relationships. It could be argued therefore, that as well, PR practitioners must earn the trust of clients by adapting their feelings and behaviour to the social and cultural context. Yeomans (Ibid.) has noted that emotional labour is used in the case of journalists. This theory is drawn from Hochschild (2003), who pointed out that an individual will control his/her feelings and act according to the social context in order to agree with customer.

Although it must be pointed out that Hochschild was criticized by Korczynski (2003) for being pessimist in relation to the fact that some individuals search for occupations in which they can express their self-identity.

The thesis so far has examined the literature on PR in the Middle East and Saudi Arabia, and has shown the type of duties that PR practitioners undertake and the obstacles they face. It must be noted that an important point to discuss in relation to PR in SA is the presence of women in PR. As the PR sector in Western countries is predominantly female, in SA PR practitioners' positions are mostly occupied by males (Shah 2015). The causes of this imbalance will be discussed in the next section. This discussion helps the present thesis because it provides an image of the

PR background in SA, and provides further understanding of the practice within this particular context.

2.16 Women and PR in Saudi Arabia

In SA, women in PR are found in only a small percentage of the positions. Although there is no official statistic to show the exact number of males and females in PR, there are studies that suggest this (Aleqtisadiah 2007; Al Shohaib et al. 2009; Aldubaikhi 2013). A study by Al Shohaib et al. (2009) of over 300 individuals has suggested that female practitioners represent only one percent of those in the field. This was attributed to the fact that the job entails certain duties, such as travelling, working with males, working night shifts (Al Shohaib et al. 2009) and so the low numbers of women involved in PR may be due to cultural and traditional norms. However, the author did not undertake a study on this subject and these are only statements. An explanation of the small number of women in PR may be that they have had late access to PR education. Aldubaikhi (2013) states that PR, as a subject in universities, was available for women starting in 2007. The first master's degree was set up in 2014, and in 2015 the first doctorate in advertising and integrated marketing communications was set up (Alshamani 2015).

Apart from that, studies have noted an increasing need for women in PR in SA. The need for women in PR was created because the government realised the importance of PR and they encouraged governmental institutions to develop positions for them. Women only institutions were thus developed in these departments and this created a need for PR women specialists (Aldubaikhi 2013). This explains why women who have entered PR have chosen the government sector over the private sector (Arab News 2013). Initiatives to encourage women to enter PR were taken, for example, in 2014 an academic program was created that includes courses in PR management, social media and media campaigns (Arab News 2014).

Although there seems to be overall encouragement to increase the number of females in PR, there are still difficulties that they encounter. For example, in terms of education, PR courses are rare (Aleqtisadiah 2007) and only 20 percent of Saudi

female PR officers attended a PR training course. A study points out that none of them graduated from a university PR programme, but instead from different specialities, such as science management, social services, pharmacy and chemistry (Aldubaikhi 2013).

According to Aldubaikhi (2013), women in PR complain about the weakness of university PR programmes level education and training programmes, and also complain that they do not attend meetings or participate in decisions Practitioners' duties were also limited to protocol, receiving guests, hospitality and internal communication (Aldubaikhi 2013). An interesting observation related to women and culture was the fact that women prefer not to talk to external publics due to Saudi culture, where females prefer to communicate within a female environment rather than to communicate externally with a mixed environment (Aldubaikhi 2013). The results also showed that they are conservative and prefer not to become publicly known, refusing to participate on TV, or in interviews or radio (Aldubaikhi 2013). It might therefore be stated that these studies suggest that the cultural context determines women not to choose a career in PR. Altamimi (2014) believes that females form only a small number due to the fact that they cannot drive and cannot travel outside the country without the permission of a male. This explanation, however, is not satisfactory, because research shows that women work in diverse domains in SA, such as education, the medical sector and, moreover, the number of females who access the work force is increasing (Al-Hussain and Al-Marzooq 2015). Moreover, Altamimi (2014) did not undertake research that explains the small number of female practitioners in PR in SA.

In an attempt to find the reasons why PR is dominated by men, an examination of the literature on Saudi women indicates that a small percentage of women are in the workforce, for many reasons, such as the separation of the genders, traditions and conservative views on women's participation in nation building. Moreover, the work market is overburdened with foreign workers instead of being filled by Saudi female graduates (Hamdan 2005). There seems to be a positive change in the Saudi workforce, as the number of women working has increased over the years (Al-

Hussain and Al-Marzooq 2015). For example, in 2009, 50,000 women were working, and this number grew to 400,000 by 2013. In fact, among all of the Gulf countries, SA has had the highest increase in the number of women in the workforce between 2009 and 2013 (Al-Hussain and Al-Marzooq 2015). Moreover, women have been encouraged to participate in the workforce by the government through an initiative establishing a business process outsourcing centre in 2014 (Al-Hussain and Al-Marzooq 2015).

However, gender related issues are not only found in Saudi Arabia but must be recognized as a universal issue. Published studies on gender bias such as the Global Gender Gap report researched by the World Economic Forum in 2015 reveals that there is no country in the world that has managed to achieve gender equality fully. The closest countries to gender equality are Ireland and Norway and Finland, which have managed to close 80 percent of the gender gap.

Regarding gender and Islam, Muslim scholars have different perspectives and interpretations of this subject. In essence, Islam encourages both genders to contribute to society, both socially and economically (Sidani 2005). The way in which this is interpreted and applied varies in each country or region. In SA, due to gender separation, females and males study in separate institutions. This means that the educational staff is also separated, female teachers will teach female students (Saleh 1986; Rugh 2002). This separation in education has been carried out in order to preserve culture and society and it continues in the work environment (Sanabary 1994). In the work environment, gender separation is still enforced, and women tend to go into traditional jobs such as teaching, medicine and social work (Sanabary 1994). In SA, reduced female participation in the work force has been attributed mostly to cultural norms, and these are of tribal origin and not for religious reasons, as it is often thought (Sidani 2005). For example, Fatany (2007) pointed out that women themselves are often the obstacle to development, in terms of gender:

Women's reluctance to embrace the change and opportunities extended to them also is demonstrated by the refusal of women to vote for women candidates running in chamber elections in the Eastern Province, which

resulted in failure. Even in Jeddah, it was the men's vote that put women on the board — not the limited support of their sisters. (Fatany 2007, p. 18)

In order to solve this issue in Saudi society, Fatany (2007) has called institutions, scholars and the population to several actions, such as fighting against discrimination, highlighting successful women in their own fields in the media and raising the levels of education. In addition to discussing issues concerning gender in PR, it is important to examine PR practitioners' relationship with the journalists, as practitioners' communication with the various publics is often carried out through media and therefore practitioners often have to maintain media relations. Moreover, this examination will help the thesis to investigate how public communication factors affect the work of PR practitioners.

2.17 Saudi public relations practitioners and journalists

Qualitative research by Abdelhay (2014) shows that journalists in SA believe that PR practitioners do not understand the need for accurate press releases, do not understand how the media system works, and journalists do not appreciate being sent useless information. Journalists say that most of the time they need to contact someone directly from the management, because PR departments are not aware what is happening inside the company and they are very slow in providing information (Abdelhay 2014).

Additionally, the strained relationship with the media comes from the fact that PR departments try to delay or hide bad news and thus offer contradictory or inaccurate information. As was pointed out earlier, laws affect media and news selection, which means that when sending out news the information prepared must respect Islamic law. Decisions that are taken in businesses are also taken after consultancy with the tribe, and because a characteristic of individuals in this area is to avoid criticism, and because pride is valued in society, businesses may want to avoid disclosing news that may bring criticism from the media (Karolak and Guta 2005). Research by Abdelhay (2014) shows that there is no communication between PR and the stakeholders, and PR practitioners spend their time mostly sending press releases. PR practitioners in

SA are involved in relationship building between the organisation's employees and between the organisation and the external stakeholders.

This description of relationship building with external stakeholders seems to show that this activity could be corporate diplomacy. Corporate diplomacy, according to Asquer (2012), consists of building strategic relationships and partnerships, which includes communicating, negotiating and sharing information between companies and governments. It is also considered that PR officers are successful in their job if they have a wide network of contacts. This network is always maintained through social activities, such as meetings and dinners. According to Abdelhay (2014), in SA the most practised PR model is the cultural interpreter model. This means PR practitioners' main duties are related to the company's clients, for instance, by helping international clients understand the local business environment, and introducing them to local people. All these studies highlight the fact that even though PR practice in SA seems to be developing, PR practitioners' main duties seem to be focusing on networking and maintaining business relationships through social activities. While the thesis has looked at the general duties that PR practitioners undertake, and their relationship with journalists, it is important also to look at what type of knowledge PR practitioners acquire in order to develop their careers, and how education and training affects PR practice.

2.18 Public relations training and research in the Middle East

This section follows from the previous one, which focused on PR in the Arabian Gulf countries, and it is now necessary to explain the PR training and research that is undertaken in this area. Firstly, it is important to note that there is little empirical work on PR in the Arab world, and the few publications that exist focus more on the theoretical part than on practical advice (Algalab 2011). The books are not accessible to other audiences than university students and they are high in price. The majority of books are translated Western PR books, very few PR journals and magazines are published, and that is because PR associations do not publish them for financial reasons, there is a small readership and a lack of interest. PR research is done rarely, and when this is undertaken, the research papers are not published widely or put

online (Algalab 2011). Gilinder (2012) stated that students in Arab countries study theories of the science of communication that are not suitable to their cultural realities. The theories are western, such as the Four Theories of the Press, Schramm's model of communication, Berlo's model of communication, framing theory, agenda setting theory, media effects theories, and these theories include the history of the media effect theories, such as Uses and Gratification Theory, Agenda Settings Theory, Cultivation Theory, the Knowledge Gap Theory, Information Processing Theory, the Theory of Information Transmission in Two Phases, and Media System Dependency Theory (King Saud University 2011; Gilinder 2012; Faculty of Media and Communication 2016; King Saud University 2016).

The Four Theories of the Press: the authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility and Soviet communist concepts, are what the communication theorists Siebert, Peterson and Schramm believed to be the forms the press takes around the world. In other words, the authors considered that the press reflects the country's political structure and society (Siebert et al. 1956). These theories could be considered not irrelevant to Arab culture as, since 1956, the political environment in the US was different from the Saudi Arabia's environment. Schramm's model of communication describes a communication that is a social interaction between two parties that includes knowledge, asking questions and advice (Schramm 1954). This theory, however, ignores auto communication and intrapersonal communication, such as through diaries. Berlo's model of communication considers verbal and non-verbal communication and takes into consideration the emotional aspect of the message (Berlo 1960). Framing Theory refers to the fact that the information that people receive and interpret around the world is according to their own natural and social framework (Goffman 1974). Framing Theory is very close to Agenda Setting Theory, which states that the media decide the public agenda (McCombs and Shaw 1972). As pointed out previously, these Western theories are not applicable and relevant to a country that has a different culture, like SA.

As can be seen, the PR curriculum is western-centric. The majority of PR literature tends to be thus and most papers are published in Western countries, such as the UK

and the USA since the communication field and its theories were born from theories that emerged in Western countries. It must be pointed out that there has been a recent trend to the de-westernisation of literature, due to an increasing discontent with its 'Western-centredness' (Wang 2011). This means there has been a tendency in non-Western countries, such as those in Asia, to draw theories from different political, economic and socio-cultural theories than the Western ones (Waisbord and Mellado 2014). The reason is that Western theories are not suitable for understanding local communication processes. Moreover, scholars have argued that non-Western theories should take into consideration local values and the regional way of thinking, and that Western theories should be reviewed or re acknowledged from a native point of view (Waisbord and Mellado 2014).

Returning to the subject of PR education in SA, research shows that, in 2006, PR employee programs were offered and they focused on theoretical subjects, such as: the concept of PR, the importance and role of PR, relationships between PR and other fields of communication, communication and public opinion, the concept of communication, patterns of communication, the concept of public opinion (Prince Muhammed Bin Fahd Bin Abdulaziz for Qualifying and Employing Saudi Youth 2006). Programs also taught practical subjects, such as common language mistakes, government communication, how to write to governmental institutions, how to organise meetings and visits, e.g., preparing the table and making a schedule for the visitors (Ibid.). They also focused on PR practical subjects such as campaigning, PR planning and evaluating PR planning, information in PR, how to collect information through interviews, journalism work in PR, such as writing press releases, news reports, titles and columns (Ibid.). It must be noted that the program in the example does not include subjects that focus on social media, however, the program is from 2006 and social media was not given as much importance as it is in 2016/17.

It is interesting to point out that apart from universities that teach PR and media, there are also universities that combine PR with Islamic teachings. It is not surprising, as discussed before, that Islamic religion is highly valued in the area and is embedded in the culture. Moreover, the country is run politically, economically

and culturally in such a way that even laws are created in accordance with Islamic religion. Students of the Umm Al Qura University attend PR courses, but also PR courses from an Islamic point of view. The concept of PR from an Islamic point of view has been explained by Aloanah (2008) in *The Essential Islamic PR*. Aloanah (2008) stated that PR should be built on having good relationships and cooperating and understanding, supporting his argument by what God says in the *Qu'ran*: “say to people good words”. This argument was supported by Kalafallah (2008), who stated that religion does influence the work of PR, and that PR, in particular, cannot achieve its goals in isolation from the influence of the political, social, economic, cultural, legal and religious environment. The author reminded us about the ancient Egyptians, who used priests as guides in helping them govern and noted that religious beliefs helped managed divisions of labour, planning, organising and communicating with the purpose of completing tasks. Kalafallah (Ibid.) considers that the Islamic religion has helped PR by encouraging generosity and humanity when dealing with people.

Bedar (2012) believes Islam has an influence on PR communication and also on etiquette, including how individuals greet each other, their table manners, hospitality and cohabitation between individuals. Kahel (2008) saw three main differences between modern PR and Islamic PR. Firstly, modern PR is concerned with the establishment of PR for a specific goal, where the activity is focused on institutions and bodies and dealing with the public in order to satisfy the masses. The ultimate goal is to achieve profit or political gain. Secondly, Islamic PR's focus ideally is also concerned with establishing friendly relations that are based on love and cooperation between individuals, with the purpose of creating a coherent monolithic society. Kahel (Ibid.) suggested that Islamic PR's purpose is to benefit humans, to create beneficial relationships, and it is not focused at all on material or political gains for any institution or individual. Secondly, he believes that modern PR depends on the fact that certain people, institutions or bodies do not show honesty or brightness, and instead show falsity and fabricate information. On the other hand, Islamic PR would improve the lives of the individuals that belong to a community (Ibid.). Thirdly, Islamic PR would provide more authenticity and depth, if compared to modern PR,

because Islamic PR, starting with private relations, would form something like a family system and would sustain morality (Ibid.). In the Islamic system, the child practises good relations from an early age in the community and the family, and when children become adult members of that society, they will practise good behaviour naturally, because the community raised them in this way (Ibid.). Tilson (2011) believes that in religious societies, faith has to be included in cultural factors that are taken into consideration by PR practitioners. It was also pointed out that PR literature that has discussed the inclusion of cultural factors, including the consideration of gender issues, racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, has largely ignored religion (Tilson 2011).

This view on PR and religion is not unique, as other researchers have also addressed this subject. L'Etang (2004) has pointed out that the editor, Bill Seymour, in the first edition of *PR in 1948*, believed that, ideally, PR practitioners were the guardians of truth, without explaining any details into what this vague term means, and, similarly, the Chief Public Relations Officer of London Transport also promoted truth in order to fight propaganda by adhering to Christian principles, as he noted:

Evil propaganda must be met and beaten by the Truth. She will always win... Give her wings! Let the air be hers and the press and the film and the posters... Let it not be a question so much of countering communist propaganda but of getting in first... Faith exemplified in our adherence to Christian principles and thought is essential to the preservation of Western life as we know it... a formidable rampart against the insidious workings of evil propaganda. (Dodson-Wells 1951 cited in L'Etang 2004, p. 69)

From a religious point of view, the PR practitioner was thus seen as an apostle of his/her company (L'Etang 2004). Historically, PR has worked together with religious institutes (Lamme 2014). For example, in the USA in the 1730s-1740s, there was a relationship between American evangelism and public relations that consisted in activities such as advocacy, education, and even state affairs. In fact, powerful individuals who were involved in religion at that time, were also involved in public relations. Their involvement in both areas determined decisions such as the nationwide prohibition of alcohol (Lamme 2014). Regarding public relations practitioners who represent churches, Stoody, in his 1959 (*Handbook of Church*

Public Relations) pointed out that individuals who work in PR and want to become propagandistic manipulators are rare, and that the majority of PR practitioners are actually respecting the standards of truth and good taste, and they work for the public wellbeing (Stoody 1959). Research by (Cannon 2008) also showed that public relations officers working for religious units were encouraged to spread accurate information and not to promote unfavourable information. Bedar (2012) considers that, in modern PR, the individual learns how to practise it only when entering the profession, and what individuals learn in university is not the same knowledge they learnt at a young age.

Continuing the discussion on PR and Islam, it is important to state that the Islamic PR principle takes its knowledge from the good behaviour that was promoted by the *Qu'ran* and the Prophet Mohammed's statements (Aloanah 2008). As the *Qu'ran* states, God sent the Prophet Mohammed to people to help with their good morals. In line with this statement, Aloanah (2008) has suggested that PR behaviour should reflect Islamic teachings and that PR departments should ethically and morally support higher management, and not lie to other people to reach the target of the organisation. Aloanah's (Ibid.) suggestions might be useful for PR practitioners in this area, however, research suggests that, in reality, most individuals that study PR in Saudi universities use PR curricula from Western PR universities (Al-Rashed 2010). Even though economic growth has determined the increasing demand for PR practitioners and a first degree programme was introduced in 1976 by King Saud University (Al Habeeb 2007), PR programmes have often been taught as part of a BA degree in communication, mass communication or journalism. After an analysis of the PR research and training that is done in this area, the thesis will look at how PR associations manage PR and how they contribute to PR development in SA.

2.19 Public relations associations

There is a small number of PR associations in the Middle East, despite the fact that there are 22 countries in this area. Arab PR associations (see Appendix 6) state that their purpose is to bring awareness about the purpose of PR and to encourage research and cultural studies. Associations such as the Middle East Public Relations

Association (MEPRA), in Abu Dhabi oblige other associations to comply with their code of conduct, bring awareness of PR in the area, offer the opportunity for PR practitioners from other associations to network and discuss, and also offers awards (Algalab 2011). One of the biggest PR Associations in the area, MEPRA, was founded in 2001, its headquarters are in the UAE, it has 10 board members and 350 members. The association organises an event every year at which it awards the best PR companies in the area, including Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The association has reviewed campaigns that were organised in the area and it noted growing activity in PR. For example, in 2009, there were 61 best practice submissions at the MEPRA awards, while in 2010 there were 86 (Hill 2011). In 2009, 11 agencies were registered with MEPRA, and in 2010 there were 13. Moreover, in 2009, seven in-house corporate teams submitted campaigns, in 2010 there were 11 (Hill 2011). Saudi Arabia has one PR association; however, no information could be found about the number of members nor about when it was founded.

Broadly speaking, in spite of the fact that the PR associations have clear goals and objectives, researchers consider that their performance is still weak if compared to Western PR associations (Algalab 2011). This is because, first of all, financial resources are scarce and this affects their practice. They are not capable of acquiring qualified personnel, communication and collaboration is weak, activities are limited to training, publishing materials are rare, the associations concentrate their activities on their local areas and do not encourage international participants, the membership fees are high, and their activity is suspended for long periods of time (Algalab 2011). As research shows, Saudi PR associations can be formed only with legal permission from the government and the association has to be organised by academics in the field. A look into the Saudi Association for Public Relations and Advertising website reveals that there are nine board directors, who work both for the government and for the private sector. For example, their job titles are: Professor in media and PR, Manager of PR department at a Saudi ministry, Associate professors and lecturers in communication at a Saudi university, Manager of the PR department at the Saudi

cancer charity, Chief Editor of an electronic newspaper (Saudi Association for Public Relations and Advertisement 2015).

2.20 Conclusion

This chapter attempts to bring together theories and empirical studies that have focused on the cultural, public communication and political background of SA, the role of religion in SA, the influence of globalisation and PR in Saudi Arabia.

The chapter has tried to illuminate the relevant features of culture within which PR develops its knowledge and operates:

- the traditional values and religion (such as family, tribe, religion as the ethical framework versus individualist framework in Western cultures)
- modern media institutions combined with Muslim values
- outside influences such as education and business practices
- the broad tension between tradition and change within the global world
- freedom and persuasion versus community

Although the media infrastructure is developed, the PR sector is still considered to be weakly developed. Gulf countries seem to share the same PR issues, such as the fact that there is a lack of PR experts, PR practitioners' duties are limited to protocol and media relations. Considering these important facts, this thesis examines whether these cultural and public communication factors influence the development of PR in Saudi Arabia, and how PR practitioners acquire knowledge in this context. In the next chapter, the thesis looks at the relationship between the concept of 'profession' and PR is, and the debate surrounding the concept 'profession' and occupation and how PR and culture was studied in the literature.

Chapter 3: Professionalising public relations practice in Saudi Arabia

This chapter examines the literature on the concept of profession and the relationship between the PR occupation and the concept of 'profession'. The purpose of this chapter is to understand the PR as an occupational group in SA by examining the notion of profession in relation to PR practice as viewed by Western theorists and the notion of profession as viewed by the Islamic world. More importantly, the main interest behind the theories of profession is the question of social organisation of acquisition, value and use of specialist knowledge. The thesis examines the question of knowledge that PR practitioners possess, the use of knowledge and the transmitting of knowledge within the professional group through education within the sociological framework.

In the Western literature, the understanding of knowledge has been developed in a certain context of a capitalist economy and individualistic philosophy of understanding the place and role of individual within the economic effort and social place. The Western approach in understanding knowledge is understood in an empirical way. The knowledge is formed through academic research, by building theories (Weber 1978; MacDonald 1995). This type of functionalist approach has a heavy Weberian influence and it claims that profession has a certain role in society. Weber has developed this type of approach within a broader social structure. From a traditional functionalist point of view, knowledge allows the profession to achieve these useful functions and it is a resource that allows professional to perform successfully (Weber 1978; MacDonald 1995).

A newer approach (Sudaby and Viale (2011), Evetts (2011), Muzio and Kirkpatrick (2011), Mueller et al. (2011)) has been developed within an institutional understanding of the profession. This means knowledge is developed within the structure of large companies. The performance of the profession is shaped by what

those organisations need and how they compete in their markets. Therefore, the profession is not autonomous but it is influenced by the global market.

This thesis, examines the relationship between professional knowledge and performance and it looks at the socio-cultural context which is different from the context that produces western broader understandings. The thesis examines a different culture in an attempt to try and understand the source of the knowledge, how the practitioners develop the knowledge, how the knowledge comes from the interactions that those practitioners have with various cultural realities and settings in which they operate. The thesis tries to understand if the knowledge they use derives from the practitioners' education, what they learn and what knowledge they use in their work.

This chapter begins by drawing out the concept of 'profession'. This section examines the sociological approaches to the concept by the sociologists Larsson and MacDonald, who address the strengths and weaknesses of the profession. The researchers discuss profession in relation to the historical, cultural context of Western countries. The section continues with Johnson's alternative approach to professions, examining occupational change in relation to industrial societies. Then, the section will address contemporary theoretical approaches to professions, such as the theoretical research by Sudaby and Viale (2011), Evetts (2011), Muzio and Kirkpatrick (2011), Mueller et al. (2011), who argue that theories on profession that have arisen since the 1960's cannot be applied to the newly formed occupations, such as those in IT, and do not see any benefits in professionalisation.

Then, the chapter examines the studies from the Middle Eastern field that focus on the concept of 'profession' in the Arab world, how the term profession is used in Arab societies (Buhannad 1998; Alansari 2003; Abdullah 2004; Hasan 2013), the relation between the concept of profession and Islamic cultures and the Muslim ethical landscape (Abdulghafour 2009; Hasan 2013; Moosa 2014). The current research on the concept of profession in Arab countries is limited. and there is very little research on the concept of 'profession' in SA. Next, the thesis looks at the views concerning the relationship between the profession and the state, the role of

professional associations in the establishment of the profession, and the debate surrounding communication professions and professionalisation.

The chapter continues with a discussion review of the research on the relationship between professionalism and education, considering why education is important in the PR field. In relation to the literature on professionalism and education, studies on this empirical context are limited, and this is why it is examined in this thesis. The thesis examines the subject of education due to the fact that it is an element relevant to the cognitive development of the professional group and the thesis is interested in the knowledge practitioners acquire. Thus the research examines Saudi educational institutions in order to understand practitioner's knowledge of PR by using Vygotsky's theory (Vygotsky 1986). Specifically, the theory states that the development of the individuals' intelligence is influenced by the society in which they grow up (Vygotsky 1986, Lubbers and Gorcyca (1997), Ristino (2008), Sha et al. (2012), and Pieczka and Powell (2016). The thesis has also employed the constructivist approach in order to highlight the influence of Saudi social conventions on practitioners 'work and way of thinking. Finally, the chapter also examines theoretical studies that have been conducted on the topics of PR and culture, Western models and non-Western models of PR.

3.1 The public relations profession. Definition and theorisation

There are different approaches from various disciplines on the topic of professionalism: functional, systems, critical, institutional. The functionalist approach is focused on the relationship between the profession and society. Professionals have a role in controlling and organising this knowledge in order to benefit society, and this is done through organising the knowledge and the professional practice within the institutional frameworks in which they carry social functions (Parsons 1954). The main criticism of this theory is that it does not take into account conflicts of interest and it is not descriptive (Johnson 1972; Berlant 1976). The systems theory states that systems are not isolated and that they are all interconnected and dependent on each other (Keller 2003). The critical theory developed by the Frankfurt School, which is based on Marxist philosophy, proposes

that the phenomenon is analysed in the context, for instance, taking into account the historical context in which the phenomenon appears. Moreover, within this theory knowledge is controlled by economic and social interests. The theory also criticises modern society that forces culture and technology to become industrialised (Mosqueda-Díaz 2014). Finally, the economic approach concerns the examination of professions within the perspective of the free market, which explains why certain occupations are successful in the process of professionalisation and also explains the economic consequences of professionalism (Begun 1986).

Regarding the concept of the profession, the sociological literature on the Anglo-American professions reveals that the term appeared in industrial Western societies and it is linked to the concept of the market (Macdonald 1995). MacDonald (1995) has examined the concept of 'profession' using the Weberian approach, which outlines views on social class and has developed ideas of class closure and exclusion, by looking at their relationship with social classes, culture, its relationship with the state and with knowledge (Weber 1978; MacDonald 1995). This approach has dominated the study of professions in the Western world. The sociologist, MacDonald (1995), who analysed and compared professions in the United Kingdom, the United States and Europe, has approached the concept by discussing the functionalist, interaction and Marxist theories on profession. It must be pointed out, however, that MacDonald's (1995) examination of professions focuses mainly on examples of professions from Europe and the US, and ignores the area of the Middle East. MacDonald's examination also fails to provide empirical evidence on the subject of the professions. Additionally, the examination relies on certain characteristics, a certain degree of autonomy and a strong technical culture, that constitute a profession, such as the established professions, e.g., those in the law sector. According to this view, if PR were therefore to be measured in terms of these characteristics it would probably not be considered a profession. Moreover, the Weberian approach is one sided, as it claims that associations have tried to protect their interests to the detriment of their clients, ignoring professions such as doctors, who aim to put their patients' interest before their own.

The Italian sociologist Magali Larson has contributed significantly to understanding and defining the concept of 'profession', although the study relies heavily on European and American studies. Larson's *The Rise of Professionalism* (1977) gives an insight into the period in which the professions started to change. Larson revealed that professional markets and professions appeared in the 19th century, determined by economic development, and then the professions organised and reformed themselves in markets. The study defines professions as the "means of earning an income on the basis of transacted services" (Larson 1977, p.9). The author states that the aristocratic tradition was no longer considered a feature that would give occupations credibility, and the fact that professions are organised in associations establishes social credit, which means the public can trust individuals who are part of these associations, which are recognised at the same time by the state, such as those made up of doctors and lawyers (Larson 1977). A similar view is shared by Friedson (1983), Abbott (1988) and Kurtz (1998), who believe that a profession relates to a specialised body of practical and problem solving knowledge that becomes relevant to society.

Several definitions of professions can be found in the literature, however, it must be noted that research on professions refers exclusively to Western countries (Carr-Saunders and Wilson 1933, cited in Macdonald 1995; Faulconbridge and Muzio 2011). Macdonald (1995) has observed that the term profession is used in English speaking countries, where it has the meaning of an occupation based on complex knowledge, however, in non-English speaking countries, the term profession does not have a direct equivalent. Brante (1990) argued that the classical interpretation of the profession is described mainly by American and English researchers. This interpretation means that researchers view 'profession' through a market point of view which means they equate professionals with "specialized craftsmen, small-scale business, contractors or entrepreneurs" (Brante 1990, p.82).

In order to understand the importance of 'profession', a distinction between the terms 'profession' and 'occupation' needs to be made, as the term of profession has been considered a Western concept, which means that in countries outside the Western

area it may have a different connotation (Jackson 1970). Jackson (1970) states that the features of professions are: the fact that they are based on knowledge, acquiring the knowledge takes a certain period of time, and that the professionals' aim is to serve the society selflessly with the purpose of gaining profit. The difference between occupation and profession is also in the facts that it is controlled by the state and that the occupational groups are structured and systematised and have a code of practice (Larson 1970). According to these studies, professions thus need skills that non-professionals do not have. They have a degree of monopoly and have a monopoly over other occupations. The professions organise themselves into associations in order to be legitimised by society and to work for its benefit (Larson 1970). Moreover, for individuals to become professionals they have to attend professional training (Larson 1979). Larson, however, did not state clearly what the duration of this study is, or if the training must be constantly continued. Additionally, Larson's has failed to acknowledge studies on the relationship between the professions and the rest of the class structure (Elliot 1980).

'Profession' is a modern phenomenon, and the fact that it needs to be legitimised is a modern characteristic. An occupation becomes a profession when groups of people try to "negotiate the boundaries of an area in the social division of labour and establish their own control over it" (Larson 1979.p, XII). After negotiation, professions receive autonomy and become independent from other (social elites). If professions manage to obtain power over examination and control, then they can become independent of external laws (Larson 1979). However, professions depend on how developed a country's economy is, and how structured its social classes are, the government regulations and the potential of the professionals (Larson 1979). It could be argued, however, that the author has a Western view of professions, as the main focus is on the USA and the UK, and the study ignores other cultures and their views on professions.

Larson's theories and definitions on the professions have become very popular in the PR literature. However, some researchers believe these definitions may not apply today. For example, Hanlon (1999), Frost (2001) and Fawkes (2015) have criticised

most researchers' definitions of professions, considering them outdated in current society and the job market, because many definitions of 'profession' from half a century ago focus on interpretations that are based on class, gender, hierarchy and, unfortunately, these rigid interpretations are still used today. Although it must be pointed out that issues of social status, gender and hierarchy continue to be relevant to the concept of profession.

One issue, Fawkes argued, is that some have focused on defining the ideal type of profession and some have based their definitions on examples of professionalism, such as law, medicine, science and engineering (Fawkes 2015). In the main, the old definitions of the professions were used to fit every emerging occupational group. These definitions are not accurate in today's world, as professionals are "subject to new management systems" (Fawkes 2015, p. 39). The old definitions, Fawkes (2015) argues, are not adaptable to changes in the researched field. Hanlon (1999) and Quicke (2000) stated that there are new models of professions that do not fit old definitions. These new professions have more of a business approach, as they are more related to creating profit, responding to the market demands and being flexible to change. A new definition of a profession would imply an occupation that meets certain requirements, such as having advanced qualifications skills, independence, working towards meeting client's demands, maintaining customer relations, having management and business skills (Middlehurst and Kennie 1997).

Muzio and Kirkpatrick (2011) have linked the examination of professions to sociological matters historically, such as through the creation of a state, the development of an economy, the creation of social categories and the closing of the occupation to others. According to this study, professions or expert jobs are dominated by large companies, for example, law firms, and they are no longer related to independent practice. This has also determined changes in academic teaching, and in the increasing number of business schools. On the other hand, Collins (1990) argues that there are two types of view of the professions: the Anglo-American and the continental views. The view that professions are independent is Anglo-Saxon because, according to this opinion, the profession as sought not to be in

the service of the state while, in the continental view, professions achieve status through university education and state organisation. Collins (1990) argues that the continental mode means that the state has control and influences professional development.

3.2 Professionalisation

The terms ‘profession’ and ‘professionalisation’ are nevertheless linked and they are distinct concepts. Larson (1979) who is considered a leading scholar in the field of professionalism and whose theories draw on Weberian analysis has defined professionalisation as “a collective attempt to protect and upgrade relatively specialised and differentiated activities” (Larson 1979, p.219). It is important to state that when Larson developed the sociological theories on professionalisation in the 1970’s, the discussion on the concept of professionalism has moved from institutional concept of profession to the examination of the process of professionalisation, such as the work of Larson. Larson has developed the professional project using a Weberian approach and focusing on the historical process of the occupation that searches to gain monopoly of the market. Nolin (2008) stated that Larson theories, which are considered monopolist are part of substantive theories which were developed as a part of a new perspective on the theory of professionalisation. This new perspective focuses on the fact that professions aim to control other occupations, exclude and have authority over the market.

Sudaby and Viale (2011) state that professionals influence institutions and the institutionalisation of an occupation in four ways. First, professionals use their expertise and legitimacy to change the order and create a new order. Secondly, professionals use their social capital to bring new identities to this new field. Thirdly, they initiate new rules that create different boundaries in the field. Finally, professionals control the use of social capital and create a new social order.

As Sudaby and Viale (2011) point out, professionals are those who produce change in the status of an occupation. In SA, as the ‘The political, cultural and public communication environment of Saudi Arabia’ chapter has shown, although Saudi

society has been open to change, it has had a strong wish to preserve traditions. This tension between change and the maintaining of tradition may affect the development of PR practice. This thesis therefore aims to examine what knowledge it is that PR practitioners have, how they acquire and utilise, and how culture and public communication influence their practice. By looking at the knowledge they have, the thesis examines the role of institutions and associations in providing knowledge, and their role in developing the environment. It also examines the role of practitioners in the development of the practice and in institutionalising the occupation.

Several researchers, e.g., Greenwood (1957), Johnson (1972), Friedson (1983), Abbott (1988) and Kurtz (1998), have agreed on the features that are necessary to professionalisation. These features are: having skills that are based on theoretical knowledge, problem solving knowledge, provisioning training and education, and testing the competence of members and building the profession on the basis of an educational programme that will be used as an instrument. Moreover, professionalism also ensures that members have a status that cannot be contested, that is not temporary, and in which members are considered equal (Johnson 1972). Larson (1979) argued that when trying to acquire professionalism, the occupation developed the concept of social closure, which meant that they would have a monopoly in the labour market, which will give them a certain privileged position from which they will obtain support from the elites. Murphy (1988, p. 8) defined it as “a process of subordination whereby one group monopolises advantages by closing off opportunities to another group of outsiders beneath it, which it defines as inferior and ineligible.”

Reed (2013) believes professionalisation can be obtained through organising and structuring the occupation, however, the author seems to be aware that this process is not always possible, since the professions are influenced by many factors, such as the economy, politics, the development of technology, of consumer culture and globalisation. When debating on the professions in the field of communications, such as PR, the factor that mostly affects them and limits their work is the freedom of

speech (Reed 2013). Evetts (2011, p. 406) states that professionalism is “a distinctive and special way of controlling and organising work and workers, with real advantages for both practitioners and clients.”

As has been shown thus far, studies support the importance of regulating occupations and the professionalisation of those occupations. It could be argued that there are occupations that do not need regulations and legitimisation, and these occupations can still serve society and respect ethical codes. For example, Muzio et al. (2011) have criticised the fact that there is an assumption that occupations such as management consultancy cannot be professionalised, and that there is a type of occupation that has developed a new pattern of corporate professionalisation that is different from the classical type of professionalisation. This new pattern is suitable for occupations that are knowledge-based. This description of an occupation that is knowledge based is similar to that of PR. This thesis aims to contribute to the literature by studying the knowledge that practitioners possess, how they acquire their knowledge, and if that knowledge is useful, in order to understand how it affects PR in SA, how institutions contribute to the development of knowledge in order to understand the extent to which the PR occupation in SA exhibits the features of a profession.

While most researchers have argued for the importance of professionalisation, Muzio et al. (2011) have stated the opposite. Muzio et al. (2011) argue that there are new occupations, such as IT, advertising and management, and these occupations are based on knowledge. They have strategies and rules that are based on knowledge and are different from jobs that are regulated by law, such as medicine. In jobs such as IT, it is not professionalism that is desired but knowledge, individuals who bring innovation, entrepreneurship and active engagement with the market.

Other researchers believe that the status of the professions is influenced by the big corporations and institutions that control the market. Kipping (2011), for example, noted that the professions are moving from the professional values that have been defined by the sociological literature since the 1960's, towards a market driven logic.

They are moving towards having control over qualifications and experience. Similarly, Muzio and Kirkpatrick (2011) believe that organisations influence the status of the professions as the organisers are creating jurisdictions for professions for their particular interests. Large companies have started their own rules and training, ignoring professional associations, and these companies have started to have an influence on professional regulations (Muzio and Kirkpatrick 2011). An example of a profession trying to gain control over the state regulations is the UK law profession. Flood (2011) stated that the UK government took control of the law profession by removing self-regulation and introducing external regulation instead.

However, the big law firms have lobbied and have reinstated self-regulation. According to Muzio et al. (2011) the new way of understanding professionalism in the 21st century is through corporate professionalisation. The research indicates new features of corporate professionalisation, such as organisational membership, client engagement, competence-based closure and internationalisation. It could be stated that Muzio et al. (2011) vision is Western-centric, and in Saudi Arabia this type of professionalisation would not be applicable as the regulation of professions is undertaken by special commissions that are appointed by the government and not by independent non-governmental associations (Kasule 2013). In conclusion, the market competition influences the strategies of large professional companies and it has determined that the service sector changes from professionalism and partnership towards managed professional business (Mueller et al. 2011).

3.3 The concept of profession in the Arab world

As discussed previously, the term ‘profession’ has been mostly reviewed from a Western point of view. This thesis examines the PR occupation in SA and, because of this, it is important to review the literature that defines the concept of the ‘profession’ from an Arab world point of view. Additionally, the thesis will also highlight the relationship between ethics, religion and professionalism, and Islam.

Professionalism has different meanings in different societies (Hasan 2013). For example, Hasan (2013) points out that the word ‘profession’ is used less in the Arab

world than in other societies, and considers that the concept of professionalism is not well understood and practised in Arabic societies, due to the fact that the Arabs work in order to provide for their family. Hasan (Ibid.) seems to believe that Arabs are not career driven. However, no sociological studies are quoted nor is there empirical research to support Hasan's statement. Additionally, Hasan (Ibid.) claims that, despite the fact that there are many professions in Arab societies, many of these professions suffer from non-professionalism in their practice. Hasan (Ibid.) gives as an example those occupations that involve attracting customers and hiding the truth for selfish reasons. Hasan is vague in giving examples, however, it can be assumed that the occupations mentioned may involve those relating to selling and the media. This is a real issue in Arab societies, and to solve this issue Hasan (Ibid.) recommends training individuals in order for them to be professional.

Research indicates that the notion of professionalism in the Western world has an equivalent in the Arab world, but the actual term 'profession' is not familiar to many individuals (Buhannad 1998). Buhannad (1998) indicates that the word 'profession' is translated as *Herfa*, which is craft or profession, and *Mehna*, which signifies career and to be highly skilled. The meaning of 'profession' is earning money from a craft, such as sports, science, and politics. When the word 'profession' is mentioned, it is related to a code of ethics and a commitment to that code of ethics (Buhannad 1998). Alansari (2003), on the other hand, gives a more detailed definition of the term 'profession'. It is stated that 'profession', or *Mehna* in the Arabic language, was defined in Arabic as a group of tasks that require specific skills that are performed by individuals through training practices (Alansari 2003). Buhannad (1998) compares the different conceptions of the concept of professionalism in the Western world and those in the Arabic world. In the Western world, professionalism means the presence of a code of ethics in the work place, and because of that professionalism equals ethics (Buhannad 1998). However, there is no equivalent synonym for the word 'profession' in Arabic, but, rather, is an interpretation of it. Buhannad (1998) claims that few people are using the word 'professionalism' and many of them are not aware of its practical meaning (Buhannad 1998). In Buhannad's interpretation, therefore,

the concept of profession is mostly related to skills rather than ethics or relationships with society.

There have also been few studies on the concept of 'profession' in Saudi Arabia, however, there is no research into how this concept is applied in SA and how it affects PR in SA. Al-Eraky and Chandratilake (2012), and Adkhali (2012), show that the term has a similar understanding to that of the Western term and is associated with education, knowledge, productivity, teamwork, fairness and equity, and professional autonomy. In addition, there have been studies that have reflected the connection between the profession and Islam, in connection with work ethics, and how this concept is viewed in the Arab countries (Abdullah 2004). Abdullah (2004) has offered an interpretation of the concept of 'profession' in the Arab world. The author states that, in Arab society, 'profession' is also sometimes viewed from an Islamic point of view if we consider Muslim Arab societies, such as SA (Abdullah 2004). Since this thesis looks at professionalism in the context of SA, and because religion is an important part of Saudi Arabians' lives, it is vital to look at how the concept of 'profession' is viewed from an Islamic point of view. Abdullah (2004) states that man's daily activities and relationship to the 'profession' is regulated by Islam, and this regulation is explained thus:

The aim of such regulation is to ensure fair and equitable transactions among parties involved and to prevent injustice and oppression; for the general goals of the Islamic *Syariah* or *al-maqasid al-ammah lis-syariah* are guaranteeing the prevalence of the interests and benefits of man and society by promoting good or *al-makruf* in such forms as equity, justice and fairness, and suppressing evil or *al-munkar* in such forms as discrimination, tyranny and oppression. (Abdullah 2004, p. 9)

Abdullah (2004) has explained in detail the meaning of the word 'profession' in Arabic, and from an Islamic point of view. Abdullah (2004) states that the word 'professionalism' is a synonym for *Al-itqan* (diligence), and the *Qu'ran* also encourages the individual to do his daily work with *Al-itqan* (diligence). However, several different words are used when mentioning best practice. In the *Qu'ran*, when describing a best practice or a good practice, the word used is *Al-ihsan* (best). In the business world, people use the phrase "best practice" (*Al-ihsan*) and people in

engineering and the legal sector used the word professional (*Al-itqan*) (Abdullah 2004). Abdullah (2004) has pointed to two more interesting obligations that come from religion, and these are *Fardhu-Ain*, which implies a personal obligation that the individual must undertake (such as daily prayers, fasting in Ramadhan) and *Fardhu-Kifayah*, which is a collective obligation. However, both types of obligation require *Al-ihsan* (professionalism), as Islam requires it (Abdullah 2004).

Professionalism is generally understood as a combination of education, training, rules, ethics, responsibility and professional development. In management, professionalism is also defined as a culture of excellence (Abdullah 2004). It was pointed out that no matter what words are used, the basic meaning of 'professionalism' is 'getting a job well done', although it could be argued that this statement is vague and does not detail what exactly 'a job well done' entails.

It is considered that a job like engineering, which contributes to the well-being of society, is a *Fardhu Kifayah* job, or a collective obligation, and this must be undertaken with professionalism (Abdullah 2004). The word professionalism is thus sometimes seen as being a synonym for being ethical. However, ethics is not a matter of group identity but it rather relies on a shared religion. For that reason, it would be useful to look at how ethical practice is viewed in this cultural context.

Moosa (2014) states that the Muslim ethical landscape is a combination of modern and pre-modern, local and transnational traditional Muslim ethics that focuses on duties between individuals. These are also combined with a commitment to God and a need to obtain the greatest good. Moosa (2014) adds that Muslim everyday life is a mixture of the culture of right conduct that is called "*Adab*", and the intentionality which is called "*Niyya*" (Moosa 2014, p. 37). This is similar to Kant's view of ethics, that it should be focused on duty and is motivated by obligation and not out of generosity (L'Etang 2001). However, it must be stated that Kant was influenced by the religion of Pietism, which is a reform movement within German Lutheranism (Palmquist 2000). According to Moosa (2014), Muslims are taught from childhood that every good deed should start with a benediction, *Bismillah*, which means 'In the

name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace’. This practice points to individuals developing a religious conscience. They say their intentions and enact what the Prophet Muhammad had encouraged his followers to do: to check one’s intentions during an act, to do something selflessly in order to earn the love of God (Moosa 2014). Moosa explains Muslim ethics thus:

One shoot of Muslim ethics resembles the ‘must do’ and ‘must not do’ (duties) features of some ethical systems. Moral philosophers call this deontological ethics. In Islam these duties-based moral rules are divided into two types. The first type involves the duty to perform acts (commission). Muslims, for example, are required to perform five prayers a day, to fast in the month of Ramadan, to annually pay religious-taxes, and to undertake the pilgrimage once in a lifetime if one can afford it. The Arabic terms for duty are *fard* or *wajib*. Failing to adhere to these rules can result in an unearthly or otherworldly penalty. Of course, in a freedom-obsessed world, the mere mention of ‘duty’ might sound odd. But in many cultures, including many Muslim cultures, duty is not antithetical to freedom. Performing a duty can itself be a profound act. One of the characters in Vikram Chandra’s *Sacred Games* insightfully declares “Love is duty, duty is love (Chandar 2006: 934). A second type of rules requires the believer to scrupulously avoid or refrain from performing certain specified acts. These are called prohibitions (*Muharramat* or *Haram*). Hence, a Muslim is duty-bound to avoid eating certain foods and drinking alcoholic drinks, and to abstain from adultery, stealing, murder, violence, lying, dishonesty, backbiting, gossip, negligence, disobedience to parents, cruelty to humans and animals, among other things. In both doing and avoiding certain acts, an individual Muslim is performing the work of *din*, namely, acts by which an individual Muslim can attain salvation in the afterlife. Muslims believe that disobeying God’s rule amounts to a sin and can result in suffering in the hereafter. But divine grace and compassion can also result in forgiveness followed by bliss in Eden.” Moosa (2014, pp. 38-39)

While Moosa points out that Muslims are required to adhere to a certain moral and ethical behaviour, similarly to Christian individuals, and that this gives them a religious conscience, the question is how this moral religious conscience is applied in every day work and if it influences PR practice. No research has thus far examined this subject. As discussed in the ‘The political, cultural and public communication environment of Saudi Arabia’ chapter, in SA there are cultural behaviours, such as the importance of the tribe and the question is whether individuals see an obligation to put tribes or family interest or ethical behaviour first. The thesis will therefore

examine the relationship between culture, Islam and PR practice in order to discover if they have an influence on the PR occupation.

The absence in the literature of analysis on Saudi culture on PR must be pointed out. This thesis highlights the importance of Vygotsky's socio cultural theory to studying PR practice within this culture. The thesis has examined PR in SA by adopting Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural framework. Specifically, Vygotsky's (1978) theory that the individual's intelligence development is influenced by the society in which they grow up, and through social interaction, and this has focused this thesis on the context in which PR practitioners' way of thinking, moral behaviour and actions have developed. Saudi Arabia's educational institutions and professional associations were examined as a window into the Saudi PR practitioners' behaviour and practice, as well as their understanding and knowledge of PR. By using Vygotsky's (1986) statement that mental functions are directly influenced by social interactions, this suggests that PR practitioners' practice, behaviour and moral views and acts are a result of Saudi educational institutions.

The psychologist Vygotsky has made an important contribution to the field of psychology by founding cultural-historical psychology, which has influenced the study of philosophy, psychology and semiotics. According to Vygotsky (1978), society and culture contribute to the child's development. Vygotsky has focused on researching children's development because it was believed that in order to understand how children learn, the study their socio-cultural world is needed. Although Vygotsky's research focus was on children's development, it must be noted that the theory is useful for this research because, just as Vygotsky studies the world of the child with the purpose of understanding how they learn, researchers must examine the socio-cultural world with the purpose of understanding how they learn to be organisational members (Ristino 2008). Moreover, Sha et al. (2012) in an examination on PR and culture pointed out that identities develop in the early stages of life and therefore Vygotsky's theories are suitable for studying adult individuals' lives, because social interactions are vital for learning and thought development. Apart from several researchers that used Vygotsky in their study, such as Lubbers

and Gorcyca (1997), Ristino (2008), Sha et al. (2012), and Pieczka and Powell (2016) have also discussed Vygotsky's (1978) approach to how individuals learn through socio-cultural interactions within a community when exploring the subject of novice professionals that enter a sector and the importance of a professional community that supports them. Using Vygotsky's framework this thesis will therefore examine the various instruments that contributed to the knowledge of PR practitioners, such as the knowledge offered by educational institutions and courses offered by association. Sha et al. (2012) have stated that the individuals' experiences as a child influence the ways in which individuals interpret and learn in certain situations.

Wertsch (1985) has pointed out that this framework can offer answers to a range of social science issues and can be used to examine the role of human language in the organisation of sociocultural process. Vygotsky's theory states that social interaction has an important role in the development of cognition. Learning is achieved on two levels: through social interaction with the closest individuals, who are usually the caregivers. This development is done through the caregiver's cultural knowledge, which is passed on through language tools, cultural concepts and symbols. Secondly, development is carried out through the individuals' mental structure. This means that during the process of maturation individuals' mental systems are reorganised, and this transforms them into individuals with cultural concepts.

Vygotsky also states that the development of cognition depends on social interaction to fully develop. The strategies that are used for learning are collaborative learning, discourse, modelling and scaffolding. In applying Vygotsky's view of the adult world, this thesis thus argues that educational institutions influence PR practitioners because they teach certain knowledge and religion, which provides an additional moral code. The role of PR is to communicate, and each time they communicate they reflect the beliefs and system values of the culture they inherit (Ristino 2008). Additional research shows that Muslim individuals are also encouraged through the use of Islamic teachings, to be professional in the Arabic sense of the word, which would mean to be diligent. For example, an article from 2009 revealed that the HR

adviser of the Ford Motor Company in London, during a lecture on Islam and Professionalism, encouraged Islamic movements to input more professionalism into their organisations (Abdulghafour 2009).

Abdulghafour (2009) noted that Islamic teachings put an accent on the importance of professionalism and Muslims should undertake their activities in a professional manner. Hasan (2013) states that, due to the fast development of 21st century Islamic countries, we need to take into consideration the Islamic work ethics and professionalism. Individuals are therefore encouraged to practise professionalism in their daily life, according to the Qu'ran and the Sunnah (the Prophet Muhammad's statements). Good work and excellence in work are considered two of the most important principles of Islam (Hasan 2013). Despite praising the Islamic way of professionalism, Hasan recommends other countries' models of professionalism. For example, it is believed that Japanese, Americans and Western Europeans represent good examples of professionalism, but also eastern individuals are symbols of professionalism (Hasan 2013).

However, Hasan (2013) and Sazali (2011) lack depth in their explanations of these claims and they do not fully explain why these populations represent a good example of professionalism (Sazali 2011; Hasan 2013). In contrast to claiming that Japanese, Americans and Western Europeans are examples of professionalism, the research does not recommend that Muslims follow easterners or westerners, because the idea of professionalism is not perfect (Sazali 2011). Sazali (Ibid.) portrays completely professional individuals, as individuals that have all three aspects of life, the physical and the mental, knowledge and the spiritual one that is shaped by the Islamic guidelines of professionalism. However, Sazali (Ibid.) omits to explain what the guidelines of professionalism are exactly and how these can be applied in every day work.

A definition of professional ethics was given by Buhannad (1998), who stated that professional ethics is the ability of individuals to carry out their occupational role objectively and diligently, relying on the profession's ethics and highlighting their

relationship with others, which will aim to increase the efficiency of the institution where the individual works (Buhannad 1998). To ensure ethical behaviour in a profession there is a need for a regulatory body, and this responsibility usually falls on the state. In the Middle East, similarly, governments have taken the responsibility for organising professions and issuing official codes of ethics, as many organisations and professions do not have written codes of ethics (Abuznaid 2009) as it is assumed that Islam provides individuals with a general ethical code. The next section will discuss in more detail the role of the state in the profession's life.

3.4 Professions and the state

This thesis reviewed the literature that focused on how religion can influence practice and the ethical behaviour of individuals at work. It must be noted, however, that companies and institutions cannot rely only on the fact that ethical behaviour will be ensured because of a religion. As the literature review shows, this is done by the government through laws, with the purpose of respecting ethics, protecting society from unethical behaviour and raising the quality standards of practice. It is therefore important to look at the relationship between the profession and the state in order to understand the role of the state or governmental institutions in the profession's life and, implicitly, how this can affect PR practice as a profession. This general discussion about the relationship between the state and profession will help us to understand how the Saudi government influences professions and how it can influence the development of the PR occupation.

The literature review suggests that state recognition not only protects an occupation, by limiting the access only to qualified individuals, but also gives individuals confidence in the occupation. However, state recognition is only given for true professionalism "In return for professionalism in client relations, professionals are rewarded with authority, privileged rewards and higher status" (Evetts 2003, p. 400). Professionalism means being an expert, and what separates them from occupations is that professionals share knowledge and try together to find solutions that are to society's benefit (Evetts 2003). The relationship between the profession and the state has also been discussed by Jackson (1970), who considers that the profession is

dependent on educational institutions that ensure the knowledge and sometimes act as an authority that legitimises the occupation. When defining what a professional is, Jackson (1970) considers that “the professional becomes necessarily the high priest of that area of knowledge in which he is acknowledged to be competent” (Jackson 1970, p.7). The literature review has suggested the importance of having legal certification, as it affects public trust and their credibility in the occupation. Macdonald (1995) pointed out that practitioners who do not possess a legal certification cannot convince clients that they have the knowledge and skills. These interpretations of the modern state and civil society are focused on modern Western countries, such as Britain and France. It is debatable whether this interpretation can be applied to a non-Western country, such as SA. In order to understand further the relationship between the state and the profession in SA, the next section focuses on the relationship between professions and professional associations.

3.5 Professions and professional associations

In this section, this thesis will consider the role of professional associations in the development and improvement of the status of professions, the reason why professional associations are important, and the present state of professional associations in SA, with the purpose of understating the key dimensions of the profession. Professional associations have developed and have become stricter in regulating and improving the professions. As an example, the Professional Associations Research Network Report for 2015 explains the differences between professional associations 50 years ago and in 2015, and how professional associations have developed (Fawkes 2015). Fawkes (2015) seems to have a progressive view and believes associations have improved. The author states that in the past, after receiving a certificate from the professional association to which they belonged, individuals usually stopped communicating with the association. However, today associations require individuals to prove that they are developing their competencies. Moreover, today, associations are more open to the public, as disciplinary procedures and ethical codes are also available for other individuals to access (Fawkes 2015).

Yang and Taylor (2013) believe that associations are important because they encourage the progress of professionalisation by organising courses, accrediting PR practitioners, offering financial aid to research and helping by mentoring newcomers to PR. However, the main issue, as Grunig and Hunt (1984) have noted, is that PR associations do not have the legal authority to penalise unethical practice, even though they can expel members for unprofessional conduct. Despite these facts, Bruce (2015) considers that there are important benefits for a PR practitioner in joining a professional association. These are the fact that the association provides ongoing training, provides an ethical guide and framework for individuals who practise PR, and they provide for networking, which also helps to provide more business for PR individuals (Bruce 2015).

After looking at the importance of professional associations in relation to the professions, it is vital to look at the status of professional associations in SA in order to understand the context of PR practice in this area. According to research by Montagu (2015) carried out in SA, all associations, including the professional bodies that exist, must be approved by the government, otherwise creating an association is illegal and difficult. Research shows the domestic voluntary sector in SA contains a number of charities, NGOs, professional and informal associations. The existence of these associations is viewed as being more informal, rather than following the Western concept that sees them as having a political structure (Montagu 2015). This means that in SA the associations of civil society do not have the power to make political changes, such as modifying laws to benefit their purpose; as they would in Western countries. Currently, there is one association in Saudi Arabia that is dedicated to the PR field. It is called The Saudi Association for Public Relations and Advertising and it publishes one periodical magazine and organises a conference once a year (Saudi Association for Public Relations and advertising 2016).

This section has examined the role of professional associations in the professions' life and how associations fight to organise and regulate a profession and to transform an occupation into a profession. This concludes that professional associations have had an important role in regulating and developing the professions by organising and

training and offering support. In SA, creating a professional body to help develop an occupation is viewed as being rather difficult, and associations do not have the ability to change laws in order to help develop their profession. In the next section, this thesis focuses on the debate surrounding the occupations in the communications field, such as PR and journalism, and their need for legitimisation.

3.6 Professionalism and the communications field

This section focuses on the debate around whether the occupations in communications can have the status of professions, and whether the status of being a profession would limit or help occupations such as those of journalists and PR practitioners. It is important to look at the concept of the profession, because some researchers believe that by regulating an occupation, the process will help to develop it, only experts in the field will enter the profession and problems relating to ethical issues will be eliminated (White et al. 2009). Bernays (1984) believes that it is important to look at the differences between the terms ‘profession’ and ‘occupation’, as PR is still viewed as an occupation, and for it to survive it needs to become a profession. PR is seen by Yang and Taylor (2013) to be a profession, rather than a practice, because PR professionalisation fulfils the five steps that lead to professionalisation, i.e., education, professional association, abiding to a code of ethics, and being accredited to assume responsibility for the ethical information that circulates in society and to provide financial resources for PR. Financial capital is actually needed for PR to function, and to whether associations contribute financially to developing PR, PR is able to function and to fulfil society’s objectives.

When discussing the reasons for which occupations should become professions, researchers have argued that the lack of legitimisation means that unqualified individuals enter the profession, the occupation is open to unethical behaviour and this might explain why the field relating to the occupation is underdeveloped (Fitzpatrick and Gauthier 2001; White et al. 2009). Although, the question is if ethical issues can be solved by acquiring the status offered by qualifications or by professional bodies.

However, some researchers debate against the process of professionalisation when discussing the communications occupations, such as journalism and PR (Hausman 1992; Trucker 1997). Hausman (1992) and Trucker (1997) have argued that occupations in the field of communications, such as journalism, mass media and PR, cannot become certified professions because this would mean that only certified individuals would be allowed to practise. This fact would go against freedom of speech, which allows all individuals to express their opinions publicly. Researchers often wonder if it is important to be a professional when working in the media and journalism, and if it is possible for journalists to be professionals (Saleh 2002).

There are different views on journalism professionalism. The first view rejects the idea of professionalism in journalism and the mass media. Trucker (1997) states that many democratic institutions and academics consider that journalists are the agents of democracy, and they provide the information to the publics as they are the connection between institutions and society, and it is they who expose the truth to the benefit of society and, because of that, journalism cannot be a profession like others. Secondly, Hausman (1992) says that the media need freedom to transfer the information they have to the publics. Thirdly, society is characterised by pluralism, and journalism should be characterised by diversity. However, professionalism imposes a specific standard and this can reduce diversity. Fourthly, in order to become a professional, the individual needs professional training, such as a degree. This means that individuals would need a licence to work in journalism and this would work against democracy. Research shows that, in terms of SA, journalism is also viewed as a creator and influencer of public opinion, although it has to function within Islamic values and while respecting government rules (Abozayd 2007).

It is important also to highlight a different point of view when discussing the concepts of 'profession' and 'professionalisation' in communication. The need for an occupation to become a profession, and the very existence of professions, has been challenged by Steiner (2001). The research uses the philosophy of Heidegger and the paradigm theory of Kuhn in order to state that if an occupation in the

communications field becomes a profession, that occupation is limited to certain rules, strategies and competencies, which means that the occupation has no freedom to be flexible and creative, and in the communications field this is necessary. However, at the same time, a lack of professionalism is too risky, because if too much freedom is given, individuals' ideas would be too risky and flexible. Steiner argues that professionalism narrows the view of the practitioner:

How can the pursuit of theoretical, practical, educational and personal uniformity and conformity that characterizes professionalism be appropriate for communicators who must be sensitive to the diversity of others and in tune with their own uniqueness? The pursuit of professionalism conflicts with the profession's belief in the desirability of diversity, the inevitability of different interpretations of the same event or message, and the importance of thinking and acting freely or even in one's own interests. (Steiner 2001, p.154)

Steiner (2001) stands against professionalism because it is argued that professionalism suggests a rigid system of rules and the communications occupations imply creativity and need flexibility and to be able to interpret events from many different points of view, so, from the researchers' viewpoint, it would be difficult for the communications occupations, such as journalism and PR, to practise professionalism. However, Steiner's view may be rigid, as the question is: why would it not be possible for journalists and PR practitioners to act professionally while being creative, being allowed to create content without restrictions and rules, and while also being flexible. Another question is whether it is impossible to imagine professional training that would teach people how to interpret events from many different points of view, rather than from just one. Steiner (2001) does make an important point about the freedom of thinking and of acting freely, however, the researcher does not consider the ethical implications of the PR practitioner's acting in a certain company's interest. This ethical implication is what has determined PR practitioners' bad reputation in the past, and thus the next section needs to examine more closely the relationship between ethics, professionalism and PR.

3.7 Public relations, professionalism and ethics

The study examines the relationship between ethics and PR practice, particularly looking at what is considered ethical and unethical practice and the ways in which this is monitored. Van De Camp et al. (2004) points out that professionalism contains elements such as altruism, respect, honesty, responsibility and integrity. To become a profession, PR practice thus needs to polish up its negative reputation, which was created through the use of bribes and gifts in order to reach its purpose (Delorme and Fedler 2003).

Additionally, Yeomans (2010) believes that PR practitioners have to fight against the negative stereotype which suggests that PR consultants socialise with clients and call journalists with useless stories. Yeomans (2010) has compared professions such as lawyers and doctors with PR practitioners, finding that PR officers have a certain challenge in trying to fit into the image of a professional consultant who gives proper advice to clients and, at the same time, tries to fight the stereotype of PR's bad reputation.

There have been opinions that see PR as being unethical, for example, Alterman (2015) pointed out that the number of journalists in the USA has halved, while the number of PR practitioners has more than doubled. This fact had an effect on impartial, ethical journalism. Furthermore, Alterman (2015) believes that PR manipulates journalism and has pointed out PR's unethical behaviour. Bowen (2012) also highlights PR's unethical behaviour by claiming that PR practitioners enter the field of journalism with the purpose of manipulating it. Bowen (2012) has pointed out that the collaboration between PR and journalism has weakened journalistic abilities and has produced passive journalism. Moreover, the PR practitioners "pledge their allegiance to their company, whilst journalists pledge their allegiance to the wider public". (Bowen 2012, p.1) This view of the relationship between PR professionals and journalists has been criticised as being seriously damaging to both PR and journalists, and it has been considered unsuitable for modern society (Schultz 2015). This is because Alterman suggests that journalists are objective in providing news, and that PR practitioners follow their client's wishes blindly without

considering unethical practices (Schultz 2015). Schultz (2015) has defended PR practitioners by stating that their aim is to represent their clients and thus to share objectively their news, and they do not aim to manipulate the media.

White (et al. 2009), however, believes that these challenges can be overcome, as British PR practitioners have been working towards professionalism and a major breakthrough was made in 2005, when the Institute of PR was officially recognised by the government. This is professional recognition given by the government to organisations for adopting and practising an ethical code and for maintaining professional conduct amongst its members (White et al. 2009). However, an issue is that a large number of PR practitioners are not members of the Institute (White et al. 2009). The same issue has been encountered in the Middle East, as research by Algalab (2011) has indicated that most PR practitioners prefer not to be members of PR associations, due to their lack of professional support (Algalab 2011).

These facts show that if PR practitioners are not obliged to be members of the PR Association, they are not forced to respect its ethical codes and rules and can therefore break them without being punished. This implies that unethical practice probably still takes place and there is no actual authority to control such unethical practice in either the Middle East or in Britain. Practices which are considered unethical in SA would be the bribing of journalists, for example, journalists receive gifts when participating at conferences. However, at times, treating guests with small gifts is considered *karam*, which is a cultural practice of hospitality (Ward 2003). It is difficult to estimate where true hospitality begins and where bribery starts. This has been recognised as being problematic by the Middle East PR Association, which has taken measures to discourage this behaviour (Middle East Public Relations Association 2014).

Fitzpatrick and Gauthier (2001) note that to respect ethical codes, firstly, the PR occupation must become a profession. To become a profession, PR needs to belong to or organise itself into an association, to have practitioners who are an expert in the field, to focus on social benefit, and to be independent. The authors have suggested

that the biggest issue with the PR profession is the fact that a profession must serve society, but if PR practitioners normally serve the benefit of the company they represent, and not the public, confusion comes with this responsibility and it is an issue that must be solved. Fitzpatrick and Gauthier (2001) have also noted confusion in relation to ethical conduct in PR practice. Moreover, PR is not yet distinguished from journalism and, because of that, some believe that PR should not be subjective nor only defend the client's interest. The authors have added that there are no codes of practice and there is no law requiring a certificate for them to practise. Due to the unethical behaviour of some PR practitioners, the whole industry's reputation thus suffers. However, according to Sallot et al. (1998), practitioners think that the codes of ethics and PR are respected and their roles in the organisation are supported by the management. The conclusion of the study is that the PR professions have professional standards and this is because the new generation of PR practitioners is more likely to have a PR educational background (in the United States). It must be noted that the first generations of PR practitioners did not have an academic background because PR was not taught in universities (White et al. 2009).

3.8 The relationship between professionalism and education

Experience, lack of experience, and the importance of education for PR practitioners, have been debated by several researchers. Researchers such as Yang and Taylor (2013) have focused on the fact that, in PR, experience is far more important than education, and this is reflected not only in the general opinions, but also by research that shows that employers hire individuals who have experience. Yang and Taylor (2013) believe education is important for PR practitioners because it teaches them how to build relationships, how to do advocacy, and to also be responsible. This is also highly valued in SA, as knowledge goes hand in hand with religious teachings (Al-Kilani 2001). However, in reality, the PR field prefers experience to education. For example, a UK survey from 2014 shows that only 12 percent of PR practitioners themselves consider the academic qualification to be important, while 68 percent see experience as being most vital for being employed in a PR position (Gregory 2014).

Work experience in the field is an important requirement for companies. Many educational institutions insist on students doing internships in order to increase their chance of being employed. Blackwell et al. (2001) state that work experience enriches what students learn during university training and that this increases the chances of employability. Work experience helps students to understand the demands of a work environment, they improve their interpersonal skills. The literature review suggests that the knowledge gained in university, and having a graduate diploma does not help PR graduates to enter the field, and this suggests that experience is what really matters. If knowledge is considered useless, this means any individual from a different background can enter the field.

The research shows that experience is highly valued today. However, this was not always the case. For example, L'Etang (2001) noted that in the 1920s PR positions opened for "all kinds of people needing a job. Few lasted, but all were given a chance" (L'Etang 2001, p.49). PR practice was seen as being a basic task that would not require education. Most PR agencies that were formed and the individuals who created them in the 1920s came from advertising agencies and from the journalism field (L'Etang 2001). Gregory considers that the majority of PR practitioners lack business skills and business knowledge because most PR practitioners have a background in journalism. Moreover, Gregory (2014) believes that this is the reason why PR practitioners struggle in communicating with the management and this is the reason why PR departments have no credibility in the face of management. A review of the available literature provides a number of authors who point out that in the last decade a large number of journalists have chosen to move into the PR field and the number of PR practitioners has overtaken the number of journalists (Meghji 2010; Lawrence 2014). This is supported by another study which states that few practitioners have a PR educational background (Bentele and Wehmeier 2009). For example, Lawrence (2014) emphasises that, in 2014, the number of practitioners in the PR field increased, with 11 percent.

Meghji (2010) considers that individuals who have a background in journalism are better PR practitioners because they know what journalists want, what is

newsworthy, and they know how to do research and can write content that is ready to be published. However, not all journalists are suitable for a PR job, because being a PR practitioner does not mean only writing press releases and there is a need for different skills, for example, PR practitioners must be subjective, which means communicating in a way that promotes their client in a positive way and they need to be more diplomatic, in the sense that they cannot be critical of others and have online skills (Meghji 2010).

A review of the available literature provides an example of authors debating on the changes in the PR field and who are putting an emphasis on the importance of updating skills for individuals who work in the PR field. For example, Lawrence (2014) considers that the PR field needs individuals who do not just have a PR educational background but are also individuals with an educational background in journalism, communications, English or business (Lawrence 2014). The author recommends individuals who are willing to enter the PR field, to have transferable skills from their previous job, such as writing, having media contacts, being creative, thinking out of the box, and being able to understand the media. Lawrence (2014) believes that individuals with a PR marketing background, but no experience, will find it very hard to be hired in a PR position.

In a debate over the ever changing field of PR, Dale (2015) states that PR practitioners need to re-educate themselves constantly. Dale (2015) no longer considers social media as being new media but as a part of the evolving landscape in which PR functions. Similarly, Porter (2013) claims that the main focus of PR practitioners' work in the last few years has been the social media and that PR practitioners' main skills should focus on social media. For example, Porter (2013) advocates writing skills, internship experience, social media experience, multimedia experience and knowing how to code. At the same time, Dale (2015) considers that the key abilities for 2015 PR practitioners are to know how to react quickly in a PR crisis, to communicate smartly in a crisis, to know how to use data and analytics, be knowledgeable in digital strategy and data analysis, and believes that, in 2015, PR practitioners would need to probably develop a new set of skills. PR skills, such as

writing and sending press releases, are viewed as traditional and are now perhaps limited, taking into consideration that the public has a broader choice of communication channels (Dale 2015). While Dale (2015) seems to be enthusiastic about the future, an estimation of future PR is pure speculation, since her analysis is not based on research that would indicate the skills that PR practitioners need and use in the field.

The *Holmes World PR Report* from 2015, reveals that the most problematic issue in the world of PR is related to finding talented, intelligent and well-educated PR practitioners. The report highlights the fact that there is an increasing worry that there are not enough candidates with a diverse set of skills and the highest amount of concern was found to be in the Middle East (The Holmes Report 2015). It is noticeable that most authors who discuss PR practitioners' education and PR practitioners' duties insist on highlighting the importance of skills rather thinking or analytical abilities.

The European Communication Monitor 2016 (Zerfass et al. 2016) which has surveyed 2,710 practitioners from 43 countries reveals that many public relations professionals although they call themselves information experts, they lack skills and knowledge. According to the study, only 54.7 percent of practitioners have a comprehensive knowledge about the field and also 59.3 percent consult and give attention to big data, such as data that comes from external and internal sources, in their work. Moreover, the study shows that only 29.2 percent know how to use algorithms for search engines and social media platforms. According to the research PR practitioners activities consists in communication activities such as writing social media posts, press releases, communicating to stakeholders (Zerfass et al. 2016). They also have the responsibility to advise members, coach, train and consult employees, monitoring and organising events, preparing for crises. The research has highlighted the skills that practitioners have and the skills they lack. For example, the study showed that although social media usage is increasing practitioners lack social media competencies and only 65.2 percent were competent in using social media

skills. Practitioners also felt they needed to improve their technical knowledge and skills and business knowledge and management skills (Zerfass et al. 2016).

This section has analysed the connection between PR, professionalism, and the role of professionalism in raising the standards of a profession. The literature review has concluded that education has an important role in achieving professionalism, but, in the case of PR, having a useful educational background, such as journalism, can be more helpful for PR officers in practice than having a PR educational background. In SA, while there is a body of information that is taught, and training and knowledge are offered, most research points to the fact that PR, as a concept, is still vague and is misunderstood in relation to protocol practice. These facts limit the PR practice to a point that is far from becoming a profession. This confusion about PR practice is perhaps what allows cultural practices to influence and control it. The concept of culture is important when studying PR in SA, as the literature review has shown that culture influences all sectors of life in this country. A broader discussion about the relationship between culture and PR will therefore be provided in the next section.

3.9 Public relations and culture

As the concept of culture is both vast and complex, with the purpose of narrowing the research it is essential for this study to clarify what the term ‘culture; means, and how it is going to be used. This study focuses on culture as being both dynamic and socially built through interaction. Considering this concept within the context of globalisation, culture is no longer limited by geographical borders but travels, changes its form, and is “constructed, maintained and reformed through communication among people within and across socially constructed borders” (Bardhan and Weaver 2011, p. 9). This thesis examines how local culture understood as a particular combination of traditional Muslim culture developed in a highly developed country increasingly modified through pressures to modernise and perform in the global economic system influences PR practice.

Research that has analysed local PR in non-Western countries has done it through Western lenses, ignoring the analysis of local culture and its impact on PR practice

(L'Etang 2012). Scholars (e.g., Gaither and Curtin 2007; Sriramesh 2007) who have focused on culture, have chosen to look at Hofstede's values, a framework for intercultural communication that measures cultures around the world through five characteristics: individualism, high context-low context, high power distance (which means an employee at a lower rank will not have the right to have discuss issues with a manager due to their different status in the company), uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs femininity. The theory illustrates how individuals' values are influenced by society's culture through using six dimensions: power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation, masculinity and indulgence enabling the measurement of culture (Kent and Taylor 2011).

Hofstede was criticised for having methodological and application issues because his limited data had been collected by using an audience consisting mainly of students and professionals and it was then generalised to a whole population. His dimensions were viewed as being insufficient to describe all cultures, and his theory claimed that cultures are static. L'Etang (2012) agreed that his data was outdated and that since the researcher has developed the theory, cultural dimensions have changed. This statement is supported by Friedman (2015) who recognised that Saudi society used to be resistant to change, but today there is more resistance to resistance. L'Etang (2012) thus pointed out that Hofstede's dimensions have a rigid framework. Additionally, to this criticism, a study that used Hofstede's dimensions on an examination of Arabic websites has suggested that Hofstede's models do not reflect the characteristics of Arab culture (Khashman and Large 2011). Khashman and Large (2011) have pointed out that Hofstede surveyed Arabic countries in the time period 1969-1972 and returned to the data in 1982 Hofstede found that the raw survey data from this region has been lost. Hofstede thus decided to treat the Arab countries, such as Lebanon and Egypt, as one region.

The researchers Khashman and Large (2011) have also proved that Hofstede's dimensions cannot be applied to Arabic culture by examining Arabic governmental websites, which were created especially for the local community and not for an international one. The research focused on the graphics, the content of the website,

navigational elements and the presence of cultural characteristics, such as content with a national theme or religion. According to Hofstede's power distance dimension, Arab countries would often use social models, they would not allow access to information and they would promote the image of leaders. However, the research that Khashman and Large undertook revealed that access to information was high. The researchers also revealed that, according to Hofstede's dimensions, Arabic websites would have more photos of groups and leaders (Khashman and Large 2011). However, the websites promoted regular citizens more than it did leaders. This research, however, had its limitations, for example, it focused only on governmental websites. It did not look at other types of websites, such as blogs or social media accounts that are run by regular citizens, which would probably give a rounder view of the local culture. Moreover, they did not examine how local individuals view the website, its utility and accessibility.

Sriramesh (2012) also drew attention to the fact that Hofstede's method was focused only on the common cultural features, stating that "whereas Hofstede sought to study cultural dimensions that were common across cultures, we should not overlook the importance of cultural characteristics that are often unique to a single culture and determine its linkage with public relations" (Sriramesh 2012, p.55). It is interesting to point out that Sriramesh (2012) has criticised Hofstede, however, the author previously used the theory in his own research on India (Sriramesh 1992). Courtright et al. (2011) also emphasised the methodological, conceptual and application issues of Hofstede's theories. In relation to the methodological issues, Courtright stated that the research participants were part of the IBM databank and had marketing and sales positions in the company, and the individuals' personalities and behaviour were unsuitable to being matched to a large audience. In relation to the conceptual issues, Courtright has mentioned that using only five dimensions for measuring a culture would mean that this approach might leave out other cultural dimensions. Finally, the application issues were related to the fact that Hofstede has applied the dimensions to all individuals and groups within a national culture, and to applying them in a discontinuous way (Courtright et al. 2011).

Venaik and Brewer (2013) have also pointed to Hofstede having underlying methodological weaknesses. The researchers concluded that Hofstede's values are actually unrelated and they are not a reliable method with which to examine cultures. Moreover, these scales should not be used to describe individuals or organisations, and they would not be useful for marketing strategies. The researchers have drawn attention to the fact that, despite the flaws that surround these characteristics, researchers still use them because they misunderstand them. As an example, Venaik and Brewer (2013) discussed De Mooij's (2013) point of view. De Mooij (2013) considers that Hofstede's characteristics can be used to describe an individual since they report frequencies and averages in cultures. Venaik and Brewer (2013) object to the usage of an individual to represent a collective group of human beings.

Fang (2003) has only chosen to critique Hofstede's fifth cultural dimension, which is Confucian Dynamism and has suggested that there is a philosophical flaw in this dimension and thus Hofstede's dimension is not useful when examining cultures. The author argued that Hofstede's explanation of this dimension, such as the fact that it is made up of short term orientation (negative) and long term orientation (positive), is pure speculation and is difficult to understand, and the explanation is not thought out and is not based on scientific data. Fang (2003) has also pointed out that studies that used Hofstede's dimensions avoid using this particular one. Fang's research shows that Hofstede's dimension was inspired by the Chinese Culture Connection (1987), which was led by Michael H. Bond, but Hofstede has taken a concept from this research and interpreted it as a national cultural dimension, which is not featured in the Chinese Culture Connection. Hofstede's fifth dimension suggests that if Western cultures, such as that of the USA, are analysed, as according to this dimension they are more face oriented than Eastern cultures, such as China, which, according to the author, is not true. The philosophical flaw in Hofstede's dimension is that it sets out both a long and short term section, which means that, according to this characteristic, countries are either positive or negative. However, the Chinese philosophical flaw states that there are negatives and positives in all things simultaneously.

Hsu et al. (2013) have tested the characteristics on 22 individuals from different countries and consider that a nation is representative for a culture because these countries not only have different characteristics but also have common ones. The researchers also agree with Hofstede's theory that culture changes very slowly. However, this study tested different cultural theories, such as Hofstede's and Schwartz's theories, and found that Schwartz's theory is more useful. Additionally, the study focused only on the national level and not on the individual level, and only focused on the particular behaviour of tourists visiting a foreign country, such as the USA and Australia. The debate is around whether these tourists would behave differently in different countries, such as China or India, with a different culture.

Signorini et al. (2009) have examined the limitations of Hofstede's dimensions, and pointed out that Hofstede has simplified the cultural differences and there is no consistency in the categories. Moreover, it was argued that there is not sufficient empirical evidence from educational settings and, in Hofstede's vision, culture is not changing. Baskerville (2003) saw other issues in Hofstede's approach, such as the fact that Hofstede made an equivalence of nation with culture, and the fact that it measured cultures with dimensions and matrices. The problem with equating nation with cultures lies in the fact that in a nation several cultures can be met, as just in the Middle East, there are 35 different cultures in 14 nations (Baskerville 2003).

As the 'The political, cultural and public communication environment of Saudi Arabia' chapter has shown, SA also has particular cultural characteristics that have an effect on all aspects of life, including PR. Culture is a key factor in the development of knowledge and by extension knowledge-based professional practice and for this reason, it is vital to look at the relationship between PR and culture. Several researchers have examined this relationship, arguing on the role of PR and organisations in society and have tried to define PR through a cultural perspective. Edwards (2011) has attempted a definition by stating that "in multi-paradigmatic social scientific fields such as PR, therefore, definitions serve to separate scholarly groups and should prompt productive competition between them" Edwards (2011, p. 4). The PR literature that focuses on the cultural perspective is quite limited. The

literature that has examined this subject has observed different relationships between PR and society. For example, Taylor (2010) considered PR as a partner in civil society because, through PR, communities can work to create a better world in which to live. Cutlip et al. (2000, p.6) believes PR involves relationships “between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends”. Cutlip et al. (2000) argued that PR practitioners’ role is to help companies and organisations to be able to adapt to their environment with the purpose of avoiding failure. Broom et al. (2000) supported this by pointing out that PR acts as relationship management that brings more efficiency to relationships between organisations and publics. The PR practitioner thus decides what is important in the environment based on a strategic assessment carried by the PR. L’Etang (2012) suggested that cultural research would help us better understand the PR occupation.

Regarding the subject of culture influence on PR, Edwards (2011) has pointed out that PR is shaped by the cultures and societies in which it operates and due to that PR must be measured in social and cultural terms and also through organisational interest. In an article that discusses civil society theory, Taylor (2010) has argued that PR has a positive role in distributing the information through which it builds social capital, and therefore society becomes more cohesive, despite the fact that there are different voices that compete in the social space. One example of PR practitioners’ integration into culture is in Latin America, where the cultural dynamic generates particular expectations of the organisation that need to be accommodated by PR practitioners (Molleda 2001). This statement was supported by Hodges (2011), who said that in Mexico City the cultural context influences the PR practitioner’s identity and the way they practice. For example, in different areas, practitioners have different behaviours, such as their attitudes, feelings and identities, which are influenced by the area in which they live. This identity is also influenced by a combination of the global and the local. Moreover, Hodges (2011) argues that societies today are a mix of diverse cultural groups and that practitioners use social networks in order to practise PR successfully. PR practitioners are seen as being cultural intermediaries who manage to establish links between their cultural identity and the public identity, which means practitioners use the cultural experiences from

their own everyday lives. Moreover, their lifestyle is considered important in order to be able to transmit credible and relatable messages to the local public. It was noted that PR practitioners are individuals who have social qualities. As Hodges pointed out, this type of research which looks into PR practice in a certain area, needs to look at their working lives, but also at their personal and professional lives (Hodges 2011). These arguments are worth considering when examining PR practitioners in Saudi Arabia. Taking into account that cultural features are embedded in all sectors of life, this could suggest that PR practitioners' identities and their cultural experiences influence the messages they send to the general public.

In a study of PR practice in the cultural context of Mexico, Hodges (2011) suggests that practitioners need to develop certain cultural skills in relation to the publics, such as cultivating trust, which is done through interpersonal relations, saving face or reputation and respecting an individual's identity and privacy. Moreover, the concept of family has been seen as being the heart of PR, since the needs of the family are considered more important than the individuals. Additionally, families are led in a patriarchal way and practitioners choose to use a more personal and familiar approach in practice, which implicitly creates trust in relationships between the company and the public (Hodges 2011). Due to their use of culture, PR practitioners also felt more capable of managing changes and adapting their work to a situation. On the other hand, it was pointed out that a changing culture is reflected in the dissocialising of individuals that is due to technical and economic development (Hodges 2011).

PR is considered to be a cultural activity and this is because PR practitioners interact with publics from cultural groups and they also produce culture, because they are representative of both the producer and the receiver of the messages (Bardhan and Weaver 2011). Moreover, culture and territory cannot be considered as synonyms because nowadays cultures are no longer limited to a particular area, and culture transforms and becomes a hybrid when combined with other cultures (Bardhan and Weaver 2011). Banks (1995) believes that PR officers are helpful as they have an important function in community life since it translates and mediates institutions'

communication with the public. PR, as a practice, is cultural, and PR practitioners communicate with audiences that have a common point of view. The effort of PR practitioners to communicate can be perceived as intercultural communication (Banks 1995).

It is vital to consider the concept of culture when sending messages, thus not only as an explanation of the body of knowledge on which the practice works, but also as a tool that supports particular elements of practice, such as message development and more broadly strategic work. For example, intercultural communication has issues, such as national and cultural identities, cultural identification, non-verbal communication, perceptual differences, discrimination, religious and ideological differences. This argument is supported by (Banks 1995, p. 2) who has stated “Public relations practice is potentially filled with embarrassments, missed opportunities, and inadequate performance that can result from misunderstanding cultural differences”. Valentini (2007) recognised that the economy, location, history and culture influence communication messages, relationships and national approaches to PR.

Lee (2005 cited in Valentini 2007), stated that PR practitioners can communicate with any public, no matter from which country they originate, considering cultural differences too small to affect communication. This discussion on global PR has adopted an approach that is similar to Grunig’s Excellence Theory, which proposed a universal theory of PR which aims to measure best PR practice worldwide. While this theory mostly addresses ethical and effective communication between institutions and publics, it has been criticised by L’Etang (1996) for not representing PR practice accurately, because companies’ interests do not offer a balanced communication with the publics and the Two-Way Communication theory that Grunig proposes might be difficult to perform in cross cultural models of PR where culture influence PR (Holtzhausen et al. 2003). Pieczka (2006) has also criticised the usage of the Excellence Theory in the PR literature, and stated that Grunig has taken different parts of system paradigms to suit the model: “paradigms rest on different ontological and epistemological bases which simply cannot be ignored” (Pieczka 2006, p.354). Grunig has therefore created a model based on systems theory, which

was not clearly presented and might produce contradictory assumptions (L'Etang and Pieczka 1996; Pieczka 2006).

Valentini (2007) pointed out that the global public approach is not realistic as it ignores the historical and cultural context of countries and when communicating with the public PR practice's activity depends on the involvement of each public and on their values and interests. The cultural approach, which is based on Zaharna's intercultural communication theory, states that an understanding of local needs is more effective in changing passive and little involved publics into active and highly involved publics. The public is more attentive to companies that transmit social and ethical messages which influence their values and culture more than the commercial messages (Valentini 2007). Valentini's cultural approach, however, takes no account of the interpretivist approach and of critical approaches. The interpretivist approach views human action as meaningful, which means the individuals in the research are situated in a certain linguistic and historical context (Bevir and Kedar 2008), a view adopted in this thesis too.

While examining the relationship between culture and PR is vital to understanding PR practice in SA, it is also important to analyse the debate surrounding the use of Western and non-Western PR models in the PR literature and their suitability in non-Western countries. Most of the literature that examines PR in non-Western countries uses Western theories, which as the socio-cultural approach adopted in this thesis suggests may be problematic in this cultural context.

3.10 Public relations Western models and non-Western public relations

The literature review continues to examine the literature that is focused on the relationship between culture and PR, the issues regarding the analysis of culture and PR in the PR literature, such as the Western models' points of view. Finally, the study analyses the literature that discusses which PR models are suitable for the Arab world. PR is responsible for communicating with an audience and interacting with the public and aims to increase the audience's trust in the company that they represent. PR thus interacts with the culture of the audience. The relationship

between PR and culture has been explored by Edwards (2011), who developed a definition of PR that is based on Appadurai's (1996) conceptualisation of cultural flow, which consists of individuals' acts of a certain type. Edwards (2011) defines PR as being a "flow of purposive communication produced on behalf of individuals, formally constituted and informally constituted groups, through their continuous trans-actions with other social entities. It has social, cultural, political and economic effects at local, national and global levels" (Edwards 2011, p. 21).

Hodges saw PR as being a "locus of transactions that produce emergent social and cultural meanings" (Hodges 2011, p. 4). Little research, however, has examined the relationship of PR with culture. Some of the research that has been done on this subject has largely ignored the Middle Eastern area, for example, Sriramesh (1992, Study on the South of India), Hodges and Coombs et al. 1994 (Austria, Norway, the United States), Rhee 2002 (South Korea), Braun 2007 (about Bulgaria) Molleda and Moreno (2006) on México. Hodges and Coombs et al. (1994) undertook a comparative research project in order to understand how culture affects PR in Austria, Norway and the United States, and Coombs et al. (1994) emphasised the fact that PR needs to put more accent on research and theory in order to expand and develop the PR practitioner's role, from being technicians to becoming PR managers. Coombs et al.'s comparative research compared PR practice and found that the country that gave greater importance to training and education, Austria, had a higher level of professionalism than the others. Rhee (2002) studied the effects of culture in South Korea and examined the relationship between political regimes and PR, and Molleda and Moreno (2006) researched the transitional socio-economic and political environment of PR in Mexico.

Several issues have been observed in the PR literature regarding the analysis of culture and PR practice. For example, Grunig (1995) has focused on the relationship between PR and culture and has acknowledged that in different cultures PR practitioners may use different models of PR if compared to the professional PR that is practised in UK. However, this research only focused on India, Greece and Taiwan. The conclusion of the research is that even though PR practice in the UK

may be different, the basic principles that are practised could be adapted to a different culture. In addition, Gaither and Curtin (2007) have recognised that international PR looks at cultures from the outside and ignores local cultures and because of this half of international businesses fail. This argument has been supported by L'Etang (2012) who notes that when analysing cultures and doing comparative research, scholars have always generalised and used cultural stereotypes and she recommended that, in order to understand a culture, companies should research "organisational cultural folkways, mores, laws, belief systems" (L'Etang 2012, p.232).

Sriramesh (2012) has observed that culture has been related to PR since 1990, due to the phenomenon of globalisation. However, most researchers have used Hofstede's cultural dimensions when looking at different cultures. Sriramesh (2012) has criticised Hofstede's dimensions, because he says culture cannot be measured and claimed that one should not analyse culture only by looking at the common features of societies, but also by considering the unique features of each society. However, it must be noted that Sriramesh had previously agreed with them and has used and applied them in his own research, such as research on PR relationships in the South of India (Sriramesh1992). In previous research, Sriramesh et al. (1996) also agreed that culture can be measured quantitatively, although this research was again focused only on Western countries, such as the USA, Canada and the UK. This specific gap in relation to PR and Islamic culture has been pointed out by Weir (2010), who considered that Western modes of explanation are not suitable for the physical and spatial structures and the cultural framework of Arab societies, as Western countries have a different cultural framework from that of Arab societies.

Looking at it from a socio-cultural point of view, Martin et al. (1995) claimed that when an occupational type is transferred from one society to another, the occupation will not be undertaken in the same way "The transfer of practice from one society to another transforms the practice in the light of the socio-history of the receiving society" (Martin et al. 1995, p.5). Serpell (1995) has pointed out that all societies' histories are characterised by different events and thus each society is unique. Any

activity that is seen as being useful or progressive or beneficial to one society, if transferred to another one, can thus be counterproductive and even harmful. As an example, the Western education style has changed over the years, historically to adapt it to new socio-political contexts. Serpell (1995) pointed out, for example, how schools in rural Africa have used a Western curriculum in their education, preparing students for a life in a different society than their own, an economically rich country, with a different culture and an urban area, instead of preparing them to contribute to their own area.

Weir (2010) questioned the reliability of the Western point of view, because Weir believes that if Arab society is examined by the standards of Western models, the conclusion of the research would be that Arab society has failed. To further explain why this model is not suitable, Weir (2010) points out that in the Arab Middle East the way to manage authority and relationships in organisations is a mix of the traditional and modernity. In the Arab context the personalised concept of power leads to feelings of uncertainty and the loss of autonomy among participants in low level positions in the organisation. When issues appear in Arab institutions they are thought of as being personal failures and not as organisational flaws. Management and decision-making are related to “complex phenomena in Arab organisations and are closely tied up with notions of shame and reputations” (Weir 2010, p. 395). To add more to this discussion, Weir (2010) considers that Western theories of modernity imply that, due to globalisation, democratic practice would become a global practice and concepts of diversity would also change in order to adhere to democratic views. However, it was pointed out that the Arab experience is problematic in terms of contemporary Western values of democracy and would thus not be applicable (Weir 2010).

Weir (2010) has debated the incompatibility of Western theories with Arab countries, but has not proposed a theory or a model that would suit this culture. However, other researchers have proposed an Arab model. Vujnovic and Kruckeberg (2005) stated that, theoretically, an Arab PR model would involve relationship building and PR involves communication as a social ritual and not as a transmission of information.

PR means interpersonal communication and not mass communication; it focuses on building relationships and not on persuasion. Their theory is similar to the behaviour of PR practitioners in the UK in the 1950s, when PR meant networking and using personal relations due to school and clubs ties (L'Etang 2001), and in the 1950s Britain's PR was taking place in particular cultural settings, such as pubs and clubs. The interpersonal model has been discussed by several researchers. Sriramesh (2006) states that the interpersonal influence model is usually used in meetings in rigid cultures and authoritarian political systems. It is also used in lobbying and media relations, where PR practitioners need to facilitate communication (Lawrence and Vasquez 2004 cited in Abdelhay 2014). Vujnovic and Kruckeberg's (2005) Arab model, based on interpersonal communication, seems to be already in practice, as research reveals that the cultural interpreter model is practised particularly in Arab Gulf countries where PR companies use locals as translators (Sugich 2008). It is important to add that relationships are at the heart of Arab businesses and shame plays an important role. For example, "if a senior person fails to provide hospitality for a guest, this may be seen as shameful" (Weir 2010, p. 395). A good leader is thus one who arranges matters in order to protect his/her dependants, whether in organisations or family, for fear of shame. The social emotion of "shame" was explored by Thomas Scheff (2000), who stated that from a sociological point of view shame includes the emotions of embarrassment and guilt. Scheff (2000) argued that in western societies shame is not as relevant as cultures from Asia because western societies focus on individuals, while societies from Asia focus on relationships and shame is at the centre of societies.

3.11 Profession and the State of Saudi Arabia

This section examines the literature on PR in SA, and its relation to the state, in order to better understand the context in which PR practice takes place. It also analyses the literature on the economic context of SA, the concept of rentierism and its role in the professional field, and, finally, this thesis will analyse the research on the public and private sector workforce, as there is a mix of cultures that may affect the professional field. It is important to examine this concept in this specific context, as research (Friedson 1983; Abbott 1988; Kurtz 1998), indicates that the concept and

establishment of the profession has generally been strongly linked with historical changes in the economy and industry of Western countries. Additionally, researchers have mostly looked at the Western concept of the profession, also positioning the profession in a Western context of capitalism and a free market (Carr-Saunders and Wilson 1933, cited in Macdonald 1995; Faulconbridge and Muzio 2011).

It is important to look at SA, not only because the study focuses on this location, but because this country represents a distinct combination of economic and cultural developments and structures. This thesis looks at the status of the profession because it studies an occupational group in SA and this concept has been seen as being the most appropriate way of examining it. Both academic and governmental sources have been used to present its situation, in order to offer an accurate description of SA. This thesis also examines the phenomenon of the profession as seen in SA.

Currently, SA has a population of 31,742,580 inhabitants, and it is reported that one third are expatriates (General Authority for Statistics 2016). The expatriates hold 90 percent of the private sector jobs, while SA citizens work mostly in the state controlled public sector. It is important to note that society is organised in regional and tribal networks, and these networks are patriarchal and hierarchical (Mazawi 2005). Moreover, the religious scholars, the *Ulema*, have authority over religious issues and also over institutions. SA is a rentier state, which means the state gets its revenue from oil production and does not rely on the population for financial means, which means the population does not pay taxes (Mazawi 2005).

The Saudi state offers social services, such as free education and health care, but these are not supported by systems (such as taxes paid by the public) through which the public can state their concerns and influence policies. The state is the main employer and the provider of finance, which means the Ministry of Employment, decides which work positions are created and what salaries are given (Mazawi 2005). However, it was pointed out that this type of rentier state system may change in the future, as Mohammed bin Salman, the Deputy Crown Prince stated that taxes might be introduced in the future in order to improve the country's economy (Friedman

2015). It is important to note that, recently, the government has announced a change in the country's oil dependency. The Deputy Crown Prince, Muhammad Bin Salman, has declared, in a special report called *Saudi Vision 2030*, that the country will no longer rely on oil exports, but will try to exploit other mineral resources and will also try to focus on other financial investments so as to improve their economy (Saudi Gazette 2016).

However, until taxes are introduced, this concept of rentierism offers a good explanatory tool for understanding the state of the profession and the economic and political context that influences it. It is also important to add that research by Mazawi (2005) showed that, in universities, recruitment is carried out through a rentier contract, which means "academic positions operate as an income-providing, and not as a capital-generating, mechanism. The rentier mode of production is enacted in the accommodation of constituencies – qua faculty appointments – by an allocative mechanism dominated by the State." (Mazawi 2005, p. 224). Moreover, any position in the public sector that is created has first to be approved by the Ministry, and the university or any other public institution does not have the power to develop its own policies, budget, or to hire individuals (Mazawi 2005). Research by Mazawi has also shown that the majority of the expatriate work force in the private sector comes from Egypt.

This needs to be considered in terms of how this is affecting the PR field in SA, as PR practitioners that work in the public sector are Saudi Arabians, and those coming from the private sector come from different cultures, such as the Egyptian one. Most of the individuals that work in the private sector come from Asian countries, such as India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indonesia and Philippines (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Labour 2013). Additional research by Abdullah (2010) confirms that practitioners who come from different cultures and different educational backgrounds can be beneficial to companies. In the business environment, most organisations in the world hired PR practitioners from different cultures and educational backgrounds, because they consider it important to understand cultural diversity, and cultural sensitivity, such as language, taboos and religious rituals and celebrations, would

reduce conflict inside companies and would improve the performance of the employees inside the organisation (Abdullah 2010).

Returning to the subject of the profession in SA, research by Mazawi (2005) reveals that Saudis who are hired in the public sector have a job that is ensured for life, with an unlimited contract, which implies that they do not risk losing their jobs (Mazawi 2005). This means in the public sector, if there are, for example, qualified and highly suitable candidates for a certain job, access to the job is constrained because positions are likely to be blocked by individuals who are set in these jobs by limitless contracts. Moreover, departments do not have the power to create new positions if these are needed, because the Ministry of Employment decides on the creation of a new position (Mazawi 2005). On the other hand, in the private sector, the majority of workers are foreign (mostly Egyptians) and they come on contracts and there is therefore a high turnover rate (Mazawi 2005). According to the General Authority for Statistics (2016), the number of immigrants working in SA is 11,660,998.

This section has considered the relationship between the State and professions and has concluded that there are many factors that influence the profession's field, such as the fact that the Kingdom of SA is characterised by rentierism, and the political and historical structure have influenced the state of the profession. So far, this chapter has reviewed the relevant literature sources in relation to the research questions. This thesis examines the key concepts that Saudi PR practitioners employ in their work, what they consider to be relevant to their work, and whether they base their knowledge on experience or theoretical studies. In order to discover the concepts that Saudi practitioners employ in their work, this thesis has analysed the relevant literature that is related to the type of knowledge that is acquired from educational institutions, such as universities; what the role of PR associations is in developing this knowledge, such as offering courses, training, and consultation.

It is important to study the literature about how PR practitioners enter the PR field because the lack of rules and laws that regulate this occupation means that the field may suffer from weak performance, a lack of qualified PR practitioners and unethical behaviour. For this reason, the thesis also examines the literature that

focuses on the efforts that have been made at regulation, with the purposes of limiting unethical behaviour and raising the standards of performance by allowing only qualified practitioners in the field. This discussion includes a debate around the subject of the PR occupation and the concept of ‘profession’.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter has drawn together diverse theoretical studies that have examined the concept of profession from both the sociological and public relations points of view, such as sociological approaches of Larsson and Macdonald and the neo-institutional views in relation to the hybrid-profession for Sudaby and Viale (2011), Evetts (2011) and Muzio and Kirkpatrick (2011).

It could be concluded that there are some limitations to the literature on professions. First, the existing literature on profession and the theoretical concepts are also limited to an American-British view, although there has been some research that has pointed to the existence of a continental view of the profession, which may not be accessible due to the language barriers. Moreover, despite the fact that a few studies have examined the legal environment in SA and the job sector, they have not offered comprehensive studies on the role of the profession in SA and on the subject of the PR occupation and profession in SA.

Hence, this thesis attempts to provide empirical research and to offer an understanding of the PR field in SA, by examining the influence of culture on ethical behaviour and PR practice, how public communication factors influence it, how practitioners access the field and whether the fact that PR is treated as an occupation and is a profession that is legitimised, determines the access, the ethical behaviour and the standards of the practice. The next chapter describes the methodological approaches that were used in the research and the philosophical paradigm that was employed.

Chapter 4: An overview of the research methods and the philosophical paradigm

The thesis has employed the socio-cultural constructivism paradigm in order to inquire into the limitation of the explanatory power of the concept of the profession applied to public relations practice in Saudi Arabia. This chapter introduces the thesis' research paradigm and the data gathering techniques that were utilized.

Furthermore, it continues with an overview of the data gathering techniques and details on the sampling strategy. This then leads into analysis of the interpretation and data analysis, such as insights into the steps used in extracting the data and it continues with details on the limitations of the study.

4.1 The research paradigm

Creswell (2014) stated that the approach to a study must consider a philosophical supposition at the same time as considering distinctive methodologies. This supposition would represent a “general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of the research that a researcher brings to study” (Creswell 2014, p.6). The thesis contributes to the body of knowledge by developing a greater understanding of the knowledge and practice of Saudi PR practitioners and the influence of cultural features on PR practices.

It must be stated that the present thesis has followed a socio-cultural approach in PR literature. The thesis has utilized the socio-cultural approach in examining PR in Saudi Arabia in order to analyse how functions of PR are shaped and contribute to social interactions.

Macnamara (2012) viewed socio-cultural research in public relations as a departure from functionalist research. The author pointed out that although there is a socio-cultural turn in the public relations literature, the Excellence theory and the functionalist models, which were created in the US, are still used widely in many

countries, such as Australia and in South East Asia. It is important to explain why this thesis chooses such different approaches. Due to the fact that this study takes place in Saudi Arabia, which has certain cultural characteristics which have not been studied indepth in relation to the subject of public relations, it is important to utilize a socio-cultural approach. This approach would help in understanding the PR sector and its work within an Arabic Muslim culture.

The socio-cultural approach, developed by Edwards and Hodges, draws from many disciplines, such as sociology, and cultural studies, such as political economy. This approach focuses on describing the context in which the individual lives, and how the individuals are influenced by that context and its social features (Edwards and Hodges 2011). It has been used in relation to the examination of the role of the profession in society, such as in looking at the relationship between PR practitioners and society (Moloney 1996) and the role of PR in relationship building (Taylor 2000), and the role of PR in influencing society and in producing change (Heath 2006). In this thesis, by using the socio-cultural paradigm, PR individuals are viewed as a social group that displays beliefs, knowledge and a complex identity that reflect the local society. This thesis employs a socio-cultural paradigm by looking at how PR practitioners acquire knowledge, how they use that knowledge and what the knowledge consists of. It also looks at cultural features, such as tribes and family and religion influence their behaviour, the way they communicate and the way they recruit new practitioners. It also considers public communication features, such as censorship, self-censorship and media relations.

The research also considered the social constructivist approach of Schutz which “enquiries after social conventions, perception and knowledge in everyday life” (Flick 2009, p.69). This approach is useful in highlighting Saudi social conventions and the perceptions that affect everyday life in SA and Saudi PR practitioners’ work. This is also related to Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural approach, which stated that society creates individuals’ personality and therefore using this concept, the thesis views Saudi individuals’ way of thinking as affected by the educational institutions and organisations that helped them learn and develop.

As stated previously, the thesis uses a constructivist paradigm to examine Saudi practitioners' views of the knowledge, culture and public communication. The thesis is inspired by the constructivist paradigm, or worldview, which supposes that humans are searching to comprehend their social context and thus they construct subjective meanings of their realities. Moreover, all individuals have varied assumptions about their meanings and they are aware of their ideologies (Marvasti 2004). Although the author does not consider the fact that individuals grow in the same society, with the same culture, so they probably do share some common interests. Flick (2009) states that the meanings and realities that they build are complex, multiple and diverse, thus determining the researcher to search for broader meanings and not to narrow the research into a few categories (Flick 2009). This thesis therefore is investigating PR practitioners' realities of the world around them, and how these are affecting the way they undertake their duties.

Ihlen and Van Ruler (2009) argued that a constructivist approach is important in the study of public relations because "public relations as an academic discipline needs an understanding of how the public relations function works and how it is influenced by and influences social structures" (Ihlen and Van Ruler 2009, p.17). The constructivist paradigm philosophical approach was therefore used in this thesis in order to have a deeper understanding of cultural characteristics, such as Islamic values, with the purpose of understanding the effects of culture on PR in SA. It was also important to search for the ways in which practitioners perceive the situation of PR, how they view censorship, and how their educational background has helped them in their occupation.

The research questions were also influenced by the constructivist paradigm. Each research question was developed in order to understand the complex and multiple realities of PR practitioners in Saudi Arabia. For example, research questions such as (What knowledge do public relations practitioners possess and they consider relevant to their work?, Do practitioners base their knowledge on experience or theoretical studies?) will provide insights into what practitioners see as knowledge, how useful

they see it as being in their everyday practice. These two questions were starting points that guided further interview questions which helped in understanding the issues surrounding the acquiring of knowledge and the usefulness of that knowledge in practice in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, through using a constructivist approach, the issues that were first identified by the researcher, e.g., knowledge, culture, public communication, are influenced by other emic issues that were raised by the interviewees, such as the usage of tribal relations in PR (Lauckner et al. 2012). These issues were examined in relation to the research aim.

Aims and Objectives

The thesis aims to address the questions through exploring the conceptual frameworks used by Saudi PR practitioners in their work, to examine the extent to which Saudi PR practitioners work is affected by public communication factors and to establish the degree to which PR practitioners' work is influenced by Saudi culture. These aims raise the following objectives of the research:

- To provide information on what type of knowledge practitioners use in every day practice and which type of knowledge is more useful.
- To provide information on the cultural features that PR practitioners use in their work and what cultural features influence their work.

Research questions

- How do cultural factors, such as cultural customs, Islamic culture and religion influence PR practice and PR as an occupational activity in Saudi Arabia?
- To what extent do public communication factors, such as censorship, self-censorship and media relations influence PR practice?
- What key concepts do Saudi Arabian PR practitioners employ in their work? What knowledge do they possess and use, is it a shared knowledge, and are PR practitioners aware of their PR duties, and how do they utilise their knowledge in their practice?

4.2 Data gathering techniques

Qualitative interviews were considered the most appropriate methodological approach when working within the constructivist paradigm because they allow the thesis to examine PR practitioners' own social realities. Moreover, they allow the interviewees to elaborate their answers and to provide in-depth, detailed relevant information about their reality (Marvasti 2004). Qualitative interviews offer the flexibility to ask additional questions that would clarify or explore incomplete or off topic answers (Gillham 2005). Moreover, given the characteristics of this thesis, interviews are the appropriate choice, as they are placed in a social, political and historical context (Fontana and Frey 2005). They therefore help the thesis by finding details on how practitioners acquire the knowledge, how they use it and how cultural and public communication features affect their practice, as the interviews are placed in the Saudi social and political context.

Several types of qualitative interviews were taken into consideration. For example, McCracken (1988) has encouraged the usage of the long interview when cultural features are the aims of the research. The long interviews are different from the unstructured interview, observation and focus groups. They are characterised through the usage of open ended semi structured questions, however, they use interviews focused only between the interviewer and the participant and are focused on cultural categories (McCracken 1988). Other types of qualitative interviews were taken into consideration: structure or dilemma interviews, which are more regulated, have a certain sequence of questions and are concerned with the moral judgement of interviewees; clinical interviews used in therapeutic practice, biographical interviews which are focused on life stories, focused interviews which are group interviews set on a particular topic that is established with the respondents (such as an article they have read); narrative interviews, which were developed by Schutze (1977) and are used in a context of life questions (Hopf 2004). The thesis has chosen to utilise unstructured interviews, as they allow for flexibility and provide the participants with the chance to provide more detailed answers. A detailed discussion on the relevance of unstructured interviews is elaborated in the following section.

The thesis did not use quantitative methods, because they would not generate detail and a deeper understanding of the culture, knowledge and public communication. The research's purpose is to develop the understanding of these elements by giving the interviewees the opportunity to state their opinions and to give examples from their personal PR practice. This thesis investigates cultural data, which has items related to views that need a deeper understanding and therefore need to employ qualitative methods, rather than quantitative methods (Mackey and Gass 2005). On the other hand, quantitative research would limit participants' questions to multiple choice answers, and this means participants cannot add detail or explain why certain processes happen (Gillham 2005).

In order to show a deeper understanding of the practitioners' world view, a reflective journal was also provided that describes the research experience and the interactions between the researcher and the participants. The reflective journal has helped create transparency in the research process. For example, the research supposes the use of certain methodology in collecting and analysing data, and the researcher is not able to state that what the data shows is true and valid. For this reason, the usage of a reflective journal helps the process of data analysis to be transparent (Ortlipp 2008). As the thesis has used interviews, it must be stated that the researcher was the main tool of data collection. It is important to state that, given the fact that the interviews were taken in certain locations and at certain times, and that there is a possibility that some interviewees might have given answers that they believed were correct. Moreover, some behaviours and the language used by some interviewees were written in the reflective journal. These observations have identified discoveries in the research, such as the fact that certain interviewees have a liberal view and some a more conservative view, and these findings are debated in the 'An interpretation of empirical findings on knowledge, culture and public communication' chapter. The reflective journal is presented in the following chapter.

The thesis has also taken into account using other research methods, such as ethnography and field work. Ethnographic research is a method of inquiry that emerged from anthropology and its purpose is to study the behaviour patterns of a

cultural group in their native setting (LeCompte and Schensul 1999). The ethnographic research focuses on examining a particular social phenomenon and investigates data that involves the analysis of the meanings of people's actions, and these actions are represented through descriptions and explanation (Flick 2009). Ethnography was not used due to several reasons. First of all, in ethnographic research, the examiner would have to spend a certain amount of time examining the participants at their work place. Given the fact that the research focuses on finding out a multitude of aspects of PR practice, such as how cultural factors influence practitioners, the researcher would have to spend a long time period of observation in order to see how practitioners spend every day activities in different companies and institutions, to observe them when they interact with journalists, when they organise events and when they attend training or courses.

Given the nature of the research, and due to the rather limited ethnographic data, which is limited to the observation of the interviewees during the interview, this methodological approach has been seen as not being suitable. The findings of the thesis are therefore created while the research is undertaken, as the researcher and the object of research are connected in an interactive way (Guba and Lincoln 1998). Having discussed the methodological approaches, the next section focuses on explaining the qualitative method and the coding.

4.3 An overview of unstructured interviews

This section begins with a brief discussion of the unstructured interviews and the reason why they were chosen as a method for collecting information. Interviews have been described by (Schostak 2006, p.10):

In terms of individuals directing their attention towards each other with the purpose of opening up the possibility of gaining an insight into the experiences, concerns, interests, beliefs, value, knowledge and way of seeing, thinking and acting of the other.

Unstructured interviews (see Appendix 1 for interview questions) have been chosen for this study in order to explore PR practice and the knowledge used within the context of public communication and culture, and the influence of culture and public

communication on practice. The participants had the chance to discuss how they acquire knowledge, the state of public communication and Saudi Arabian culture, how censorship affects their work, how religion and cultural values are present in all areas of society. This type of interview has been chosen because such interviews allow for flexibility and allow the interviewee to elaborate their answers and relate them to other relevant subjects of discussion. The style of this type of interview is informal and has minimal procedures, because the questions are used more as a guide for conversation, allowing the interviewee to discuss their opinions (Corbin and Morse 2003; Marvasti 2004). The interviewer's role is only to guide and focus on listening by using a list of questions or topics to help the interview's focus (Mann and Stewart 2000; Corbin and Morse 2003).

Unstructured interviews involve certain risks, such as revealing private issues that might have negative consequences for legal matters for the respondents (Corbin and Morse 2003). Additionally, there is the risk that certain topics can determine distress in respondents, due to revealing illegal practices or exposing certain people who engage in unacceptable behaviours (Corbin and Morse 2003). These risks can be minimised by keeping the confidentiality of respondents (Corbin and Morse 2003). Although these interviews may produce new and surprising data, the disadvantage is that a lot of unusable material is gathered as well (Noonan 2013).

This thesis utilises one variant of unstructured interviews, in-depth interviewing, which is based on the idea that exploring the interviewee's deeper self will generate more authentic data (Marvasti 2004). In-depth interviews offer multiple angles on the topic, because there are no fixed questions which will offer fixed answers, and this will give the opportunity for the researcher to reveal complex and different opinions about the topic of discussion (Marvasti 2004; Boyce and Neale 2006; Seidman 2006). Hawamdeh and Raigangar (2014) stated that the interview is a cultural dialogue, and the way the interview is understood depends on the style and the content (Egharevba 2001 cited in Hawamdeh and Raigangar 2014). Interviews are suitable for this thesis, because Saudi practitioners are able to discuss in detail their everyday work, the factors that influence it, and they can reveal stories that might

give an insight into certain cultural behaviours that influence PR practice, or to understand better the relationship between the media and practitioners, to understand how censorship and self-censorship influence their work, and to give detailed explanations about the knowledge they use (see Appendix 1 for the interview questions).

The thesis applied questions, such as (how do individuals respond when you tell them you work in PR? Are there any common responses? If so, from whom, and do you know why?) and (How does your company management understand the PR role? How do you know this?), as the thesis needed a deeper understanding of the PR environment in SA. Questions, such as (How might Islamic values affect the work of communications practitioners? Please give examples that might help me to understand this.) attempted to understand how culture affects the work of PR.

Undertaking interviews, however, might also have disadvantages, such as the fact that PR practitioners may consciously hide information in the interview (Jensen 2002). In order to solve this possible issue, the interviewees will be reassured of the confidentiality of the interview. A discussion of how the interviews were conducted, together with an analysis of the interviews used for this thesis can be consulted in the section entitled 'Research Process', and the section entitled 'The relationship between the researcher and the participants'. Finally, it is important to add that the interview data was captured by recording it with a digital recorder. The data was translated from Arabic to English and then transcribed. Translation is always open to errors and interpretative choices and this means certain meanings may have been lost in translation. Moreover, participants in the research may use certain metaphors and phrases that do not have an equal cultural meaning in the English language (Van Nes et al. 2010). To solve translation problems, the researcher has asked the interviewees to clarify and explain in detail the meaning of the phrases. This section has examined the qualitative methods that the thesis employs, such as unstructured interviews, and has explained why the thesis uses open ended questions. The following section will continue with an overview of the sampling methods.

4.4 Sampling

The sampling strategy chosen for this thesis is snowball or chain referral sampling. This type of research is a non-probability type of sampling, which means the researcher will use accessible participants, such as PR practitioners, PR managers in government and private sectors in SA (Wimmer and Dominick 2011). Snowball research consists in finding interviewees through referrals by individuals who have common features that are of research interest, and it has the advantage of accessing elite or isolated populations or individuals that are hard to locate (Faugier and Sargeant 1997; Atkinson and Flint 2001; Wimmer and Dominick 2011). This technique is useful when the research needs the knowledge of insiders, and if it needs to contact interviewees who might otherwise be inaccessible, due to moral, legal or social sensitivities, or if they have high public visibility (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; Faugier and Sargeant 1997; Noy 2008). In this thesis, the first participant from the private sector recommended other PR officers. When participants were found from the same circle, the investigation stopped and other circles of PR officers, who work in government institutions, were found.

The snowballing technique (Spren 1992 cited in Atkinson and Flint 2001) is situated within the methodology of link-tracing, a methodology that profits from the fact that respondents in the research can provide other respondents through their own social networks (Thomson 1997 cited in Atkinson and Flint 2001). Faugier and Sargeant (1997) state that when using the snowballing technique, the researcher must coordinate the sample's initiation and progress. The issues are in finding participants to start the referral chain, to check the eligibility of participants, to engage them as informal research assistants, to control the chain, and to monitor data quality. Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) say that it is false that the researchers only contact one individual and then the referrals just appear. The researcher has to be active and must control the sample.

It is assumed that participants would not have been willing to participate in a qualitative interview if snowballing were not used. This fact was confirmed by the participants in the research, who admitted that if the referral had not come through a

colleague, friend or acquaintance, they would not have participated in the research. Individuals were more willing to discuss with someone they could trust because that person came through recommendation from a friend or relative. The sample captured the range of PR jobs, as well as a diversity of practitioners, so that a diversity in answers can be found in relation to the research questions. PR practitioners who were selected in this thesis had different positions in the company: some were directors of their departments, some had just entered PR, some worked in governmental institutions, others in private institutions. The thesis thus searched for diverse information related to the type of knowledge the PR practitioners use and share, how they are influenced by culture, such as Islamic culture, and how censorship, self-censorship and freedom of speech affect them. The PR sector in SA has a mix of qualified and unqualified practitioners and this fact has also characterised the interview sampling, as can be seen in Appendix 22. This might explain why some answers about certain cultural activities or professional habits seemed knowledgeable, and some answers denied the practice of certain habits. The group of interviewees has a wide variety of educational backgrounds. While most participants had graduated from university, it can be seen that they graduated from different subjects that are not related to PR. See Appendix 22 for interviewees' education, ages and job titles.

A more detailed discussion about sampling, and an analysis of the interview process, can be found in the sections 'Research process' and 'The relationship between the researcher and the participants'. In practice, the search for participants began from different network circles. For example, the first participant was in a government sector and other participants from the same circle were recommended by him. Consequently, other PR practitioners were contacted from different circles than that of the first participant, working in the private sectors, and they recommended other PR officers from the same private sector. The three individuals were chosen because they are personal contacts and they reduce the chances that the thesis is biased due to choosing individuals from the same circle. The three participants do not know each other and thus were able to provide participants from different circles. One of them is a professor in a media and communication faculty in SA, and through him PR

practitioners who teach in universities and who work in PR at the same time were contacted. The second person is a PR manager at a government institution. He recommended several PR contacts from private and governmental institutions. Through the third contact, several PR practitioners from a PR department at a governmental institution were reached (see chapter 5 for the reflective report).

Personal connections, called *wasta* in Arabic, were involved in gathering participants for the research. The participants did not know the researcher previously and would not have participated in the research otherwise. When participants accepted being interviewed, they gave their phone numbers so they could be reached. They were called to confirm that they were from the PR sector, and they were asked to provide e-mail addresses in order to send them the information sheet and to establish a meeting. E-mails were sent with an information letter on the subject of the research, its methodology and the related confidentiality agreement (see Appendix 4 for the information letter), and meetings were established with the participants. The participants were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix 5 for the consent form). The interviews were recorded, translated and transcribed as documents and the participants also received a copy of their transcript.

It must be noted that there is a risk of bias because individuals refer to those with whom they have a relationship. Beck and Champion (1976 cited in Faugier and Sargeant 1997) and Atkinson and Flint (2001) noted that snowball sampling is good for a small sample size study, and the issues are that the researcher cannot use probability statistical methods and the sample depends on the subjective choice of respondents. This means that as the snowball technique will be biased towards the participation of individuals and their social connections, it focuses on the social connections and will probably not connect with suitable research candidates who are outside these circles (Van Meter 1990 cited in Atkinson and Flint 2001).

Rapoport (1957 cited in Faugier and Sargeant 1997) noted five sources of bias that might appear: social distance between participants, the island model, where groups of individuals know each other randomly, overlapping acquaintance circles, reflexive

bias and force field bias (some participants might have a higher chance of being chosen for interview). Possible ethical issues with snowball sampling were also taken into account. For example, sensitive data might be found, and the effects of the research thus have to be handled with care. Additionally, there is a moral obligation towards the participants to respect their privacy and keep their identity private. Details related to ethical considerations regarding the research are discussed further and in detail in the 'Ethical considerations' section.

The solution for reducing the bias is the selection of a larger sample of individuals. In this case, 27 participants were selected. Another disadvantage stands in the gatekeeper bias, which means respondents might be reticent in giving sensitive information. Finding interviewees for the snowball technique would also be considered an issue, because if the researcher does not know suitable candidates, the snowball technique will be difficult to create (Faugier and Sargeant 1997). For this reason, candidates for the research were selected carefully from different reputable organisations. Obstacles might appear to verify the suitability of respondents, controlling the way the chain referral is made (the risk of unsuitable references), supervising data quality, mapping issues (such as the difficulty of finding a representative population sample for the study) (Faugier and Sargeant 1997).

Another fact that must be mentioned is that all PR practitioners in the research are male. This means that when discussing research in terms of PR in Saudi Arabia this will exclude female experiences and perspectives on the occupation. The explanation for this bias is rooted in the cultural practices in relation to gender. Interviewees were introduced to the research through the snowball technique, and this means three male practitioners were contacted, who referred other participants, and no practitioner referred a female PR practitioner. This may be due to several reasons. First of all, the number of female practitioners working in Saudi Arabia is relatively small. Although there are no clear indicators of the real number of female PR practitioners working in PR in Saudi Arabia, an examination of the literature indicates that this number may be relatively small.

The available statistics suggest that the number of women working in PR is small because most women work in education 84.88 percent, in retail 2.67 percent, 1.92 percent in construction, 0.98 percent in insurance and 0.06 percent in communication (Doumato 2010; Ramady 2010; Faidah 2013). Al-Dubaikhi (2013) assumed that the number of female PR practitioners in Gulf countries is really small, especially in SA, due to the fact that there are very few PR courses for women in SA. However, the researcher only expressed an opinion, as no information on statistics in the industry have been given. In conclusion, there is a high possibility the PR practitioners do not personally know or make contact with female practitioners. The fact that no female practitioners were referred might also be due to cultural reasons. For example, women and men do not work together, and women work in a female exclusive department. Women and men cannot socialise together, i.e., having meetings at a restaurant or cafe, unless they are married or related (Fatany 2007). For this reason, male practitioners might have not referred female practitioners, even if they may have a work relation with them, they communicate through e-mails and phone.

In relation to sampling and the number of interviews, the research will take into consideration saturation. 27 participants were considered sufficient, as it is suggested that a number of between 20-30 respondents be used for qualitative methods (Mason 2010). The concept of saturation is used when the collection of new data does not reveal any new useful information for the research, and the data repeats itself (Mason 2010; Baker and Edwards 2012). Towards the end of the interview process, when most participants were interviewed, it was clear that there was saturation in the information once the participants started to repeat information. After collecting data from the interviews, emails were also sent with the transcripts asking for participants to validate the information and to give feedback and add new information if they found this to be necessary. The feedback received revealed there was saturation in the information (see Appendix 2 for member checking emails). So far, this chapter has focused on discussing the sampling techniques, the advantages and disadvantages, and how the issues of bias and selection were prevented. The following section discusses the research process, in particular what difficulties arose during the interview process and how they were solved.

4.5 Research process: entering the field

This section discusses the interviewing process and the additional problems that arose, and how they were addressed. At the beginning of the research, several interviews were scheduled and some were only confirmed by e-mail, but were not scheduled. Participants for this research were approached by using *wasta*. The researcher asked friends who work in institutions that have PR departments to ask colleagues to participate in the study. Additionally, other participants were approached through the university where the researcher works as a lecturer. Academic colleagues referred other PR practitioners. As well, the researcher has used family connections who work in institutions to approach more interviewees. The interviews were held in diverse places such as offices, coffee shops and hotel lobbies. The interviews respected the traditional context and the researcher wore traditional clothes, such as *shemagh* (head wear) and *thobe* (traditional long white dress).

Several calls were made to those specific participants; however, the calls were ignored. In order to confirm their participation and to establish a schedule, *wasta* therefore had to be used again in order to convince participants to establish a set meeting time. All participants referred only male individuals because they were aware of cultural sensitivities, such as gender separation and that women would not be comfortable with having a meeting. The majority of PR practitioners were the same age of the researcher and therefore there was no age barrier to influence the research.

Several issues were met when establishing a meeting with a participant who did not come through the snowball technique. The participant was difficult, postponed the meeting several times and did not cooperate throughout the research. The participants that came through *wasta* were more cooperative than this particular individual, which proves that the snowball technique is indeed useful in Saudi culture. Other difficulties that were met in the interviews were related to the fact that the participants seemed nervous when they were asked questions related to culture,

and difficulties were met when some participants gave superficial answers. To find more information, several additional questions were added, to clarify and detail the answers. Spending time with the interviewees the researcher has found that some of them were liberal and some were conservative. These views were determined by the way participants dressed, their body language and the answers they gave. This research process has helped the researcher learn more and understand the SA cultural context, the knowledge PR practitioners have and the issues they have to tackle every day. The research has determined a better understanding of how practitioners construct their realities. This understanding helped the researcher to reconstruct their views in the thesis and to explain them in such a way that readers of the thesis will comprehend how practitioners acquire knowledge in SA, what they knowledge they possess, how culture and public communication affects their practice. Additionally, the fact that the researcher has the same cultural background with the participants in the research, has helped in understanding the results of the thesis and it has been beneficial in the coding process and analysis of the data. The following section focuses on the relationship between the researcher and the participants.

4.6 The relationship between the researcher and the participants

The researcher had a direct interaction with the participants through interviews. According to the constructivist paradigm, the researcher's role is to build new realities that are based on the participants' realities in order to reflect real life contexts (Flick 2009). It has to be noted that as the researcher is a Muslim Saudi, this has allowed for easy understanding, and the language meaning and expressions were perceived correctly, as well as the real life experiences and cultural contexts of the participants. It is important to note that it was not difficult to instil trust in participants and to create an open dialogue, due to the fact that both the researcher and the participants come from the same background, which is PR. Additionally, the researcher has tried to not let this cultural closeness influence the critical views and has tried to gain distance in the analysis. This has been done through using systematic analysis, such as through using coding. The critical discourse was also achieved through discussions of the world that are familiar to the researcher with the

research supervisors who have a different view. The next section focuses on interpretation and data analysis.

4.7 Interpretation and data analysis

The thesis has utilised coding as a method of extracting data. This section provides additional insight into the steps used in the data analysis and explains how the coding was applied in order to extract data, for instance, open coding, axial coding and thematic coding (Flick 2009; Saldana 2013). The research continues by discussing how themes were extracted, taking into account the research questions. This study also provides information about the software that was used in the interpretation of the data for this thesis. The thesis used the Nvivo software system for the thematic analysis. Bazeley and Jackson (2013) have noted that Nvivo ensures a wider collection of information that is suitable for interpretation than working without software. This means Nvivo helps researchers to work in a more organised, and more thorough way. Moreover, Nvivo helps to manage data and ideas and helps to extract useful information relevant to the research questions (Bazeley and Jackson 2013).

Boyatzis (1998) has stated that developing themes is sectioned into three stages: deciding on sampling, developing themes and a code, then validating and using the code. Boyatzis (1998) has noted the structure of a code. First the researcher needs to label it, which means giving it a name, then to define the theme or characteristic, to give a description of how to know when the theme occurs, to describe any qualifications with the purpose of identifying the theme, and to offer examples with the purpose of eliminating confusion when looking for the theme.

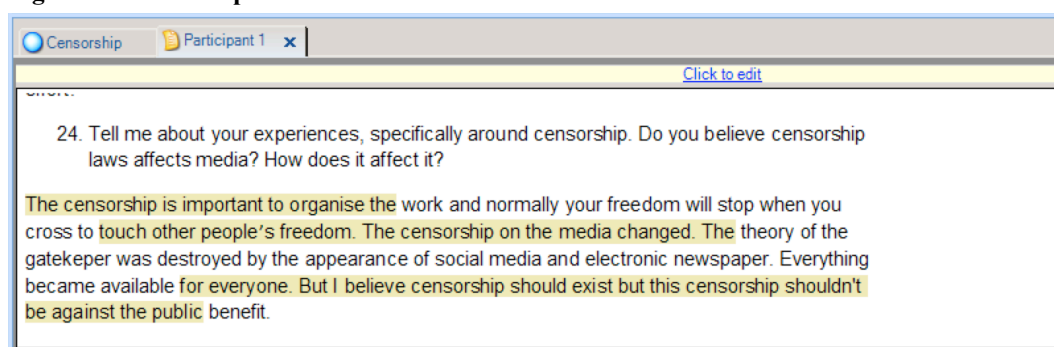
According to Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis can be utilised to observe a person, situation, or culture, or to convert qualitative information into quantitative data. The analysis involves pattern recognition, which means seeing patterns in information; planning and systems thinking, which means organising observations in a system; knowledge which is needed for the field of study and, finally, empathy and social objectivity. Boyatzis (1998) has drawn attention to the fact that there are several issues when conducting thematic analysis. One issue is projection, which means the

researcher projects his/her own ego on someone's values and attitudes. Boyatzis (Ibid.) has found that to solve this problem the researcher has to develop a code, to be consistent, to use participants with different perspectives, and to use raw information. This thesis has thus found participants from different positions and various institutions and companies in order to find diverse views that are related to culture, knowledge and public communication.

The thesis has used thematic coding by identifying elements as they appear in different contexts, and it analyses the relationship between the context and the elements (Jensen 2002). The next point will involve arranging the codes into categories and identifying the connection between these categories in order to view the connection between a process, its causes and its consequences. Richards (2005) has noted that there are no fixed rules and that during the process of gathering and analysing data, a concept is created and named. The steps of open coding are to focus on a phrase and to ask questions about conditions, such as under what conditions you might hear the phrase, and what it meant then, and then to ask questions about the consequences of this idea or attitude when someone uses the phrase. Finally, the researcher needs to ask questions about strategies and interactions.

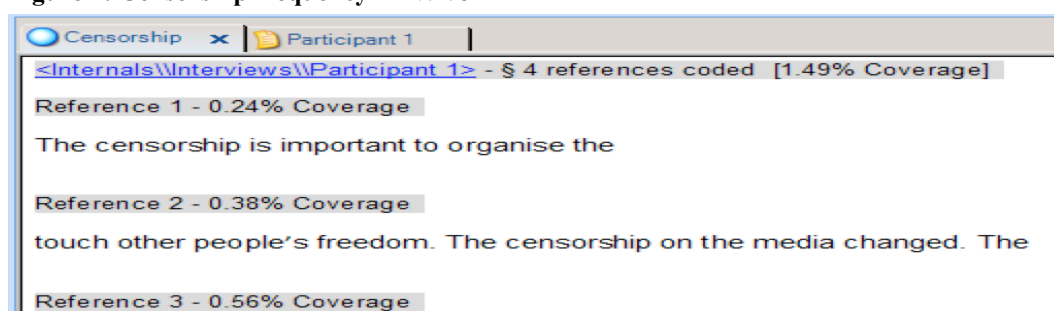
Two steps in the analysis were used. The first step was a deductive analysis, which means the interview questions were used as a guide to look for information (for codes). The interview questions were inspired by the research questions. For example, the research question related to censorship (How do public communication factors influence PR practice, such as freedom of speech, censorship?). Censorship comes under the theme of public communication. The code 'censorship' was purposely searched for. Some of the questions in the interview focused on censorship (Tell me about your experience, specifically about censorship. Do you believe censorship law affects media? How does it affect it?). The software therefore looked for the key word 'censorship' and phrases including censorship, as can be seen in Figure 1. Censorship is highlighted below.

Figure 1: Censorship indicated in Nvivo



After identifying the key word, the software calculated the frequency with which the key word was mentioned in order to develop a theme. This can be viewed in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Censorship frequency in Nvivo



A list of codes was developed with a definition and an excerpt from the interview from which the code was extracted, see Table 6. A full list of codes can be viewed in Appendix 23.

Table 6: Definition and examples of Censorship code

Code	Definition	Example
Censorship	Censorship laws that affect PR practice	P 7: “In my opinion censorship is affecting negatively the practice of journalism and also for me as a PR officer when I communicate with the

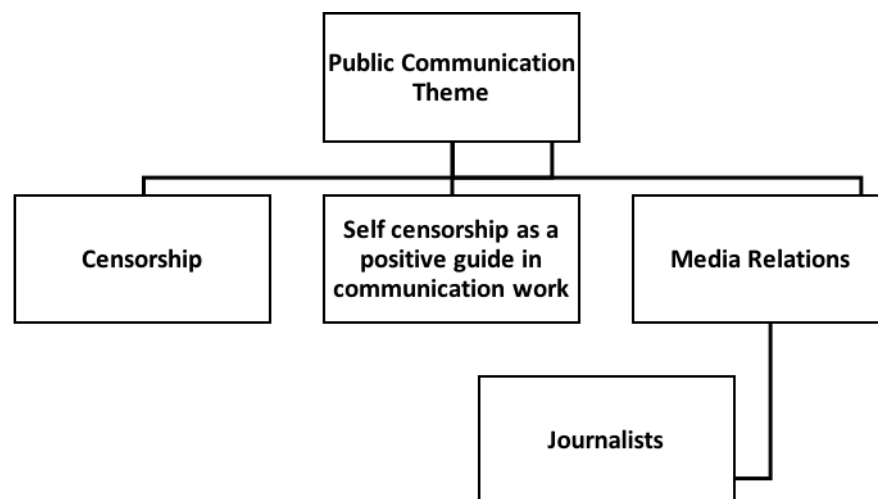
		media, sometimes the censorship limits my work.”
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Open coding was used by breaking down the data into parts and examining them, using NVIVO software. Open coding is useful for researchers who study interview transcripts. After open coding, some codes may be renamed when the analysis progresses. Open coding is used as a starting point to help the researcher with analytical leads for further examination and to see where the research is going. Gibbs (2014) noted that open coding is built up by interpreting data. A thematic structure will result from this analysis and constant topics will be found across the analysis. When analysing the information given by the participants in depth, data was organised by using the descriptive research as an instrument. Descriptive research was used as it can discover new data, such as data related to how culture influences the PR occupation, views about professionalisation, data that can lead to recommendations that will be important to policy makers or academics. Descriptive research is realised through collecting data that describes events, and then organising it into patterns. These patterns are helpful in comprehending the results of the research (Knupfer and McLellan 2001).

The second step in the research was employing axial coding, which extends the work from initial coding. The goal is to rearrange the data that was split during the open coding process. The purpose is to determine which codes in the research are the dominant ones and which are the less important ones. This type of coding is used to reorganise the data, synonyms are crossed out, redundant ones are removed, and the best representative codes are selected. Through axial coding, the categories that relate to the subcategories, properties and dimensions of a category are specified. The properties of a category refer to the context, conditions, interactions and consequences of a process (Saldana 2013). Finally, thematic coding was used with the purpose of identifying cultural behaviour from the interviewees in order to find out if religion and family values influence their behaviour.

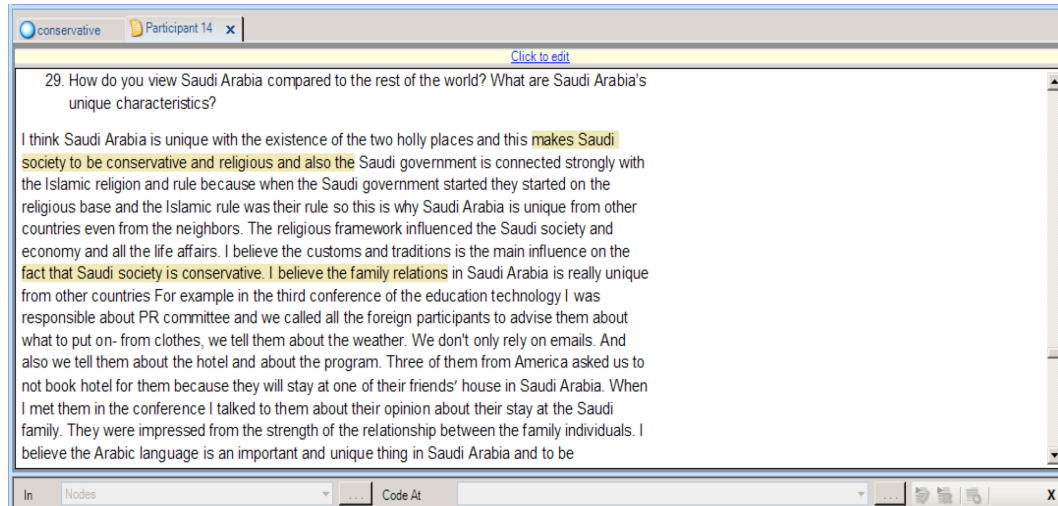
It is important for this thesis to explain why thematic coding was used. Thematic coding supposes that “in different social worlds or groups, differing views can be found” (Flick 2009, p.318) and a theme is a phrase that identifies what a unit of data is about and what it means, and it can describe aspects of a phenomenon. Themes can consist of descriptions of behaviour within a culture, iconic statements, and morals from participants’ stories (Saldana 2013). At this level, themes help to give a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of our everyday experiences. The thesis has therefore searched for diverse views about the knowledge they possess, how they use it, the influence of cultural features, and their opinion on censorship, self-censorship and media relations. The diverse views will offer a more complete answer to the research questions. The censorship code was set under the public communication theme, as can be seen in Figure 3, below.

Figure 3: Public communication theme chart



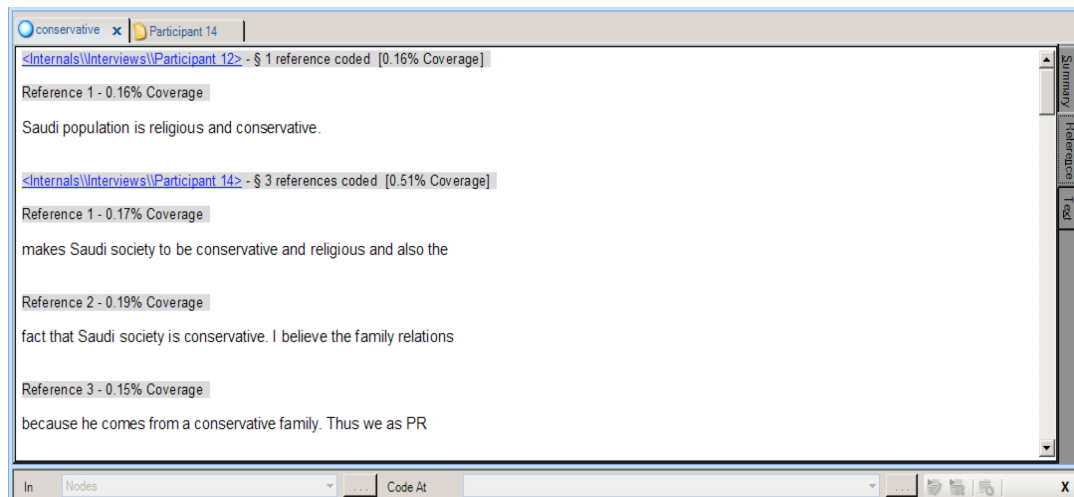
The second step, which was an inductive analysis, used thematic coding, which means the text was examined twice and themes were extracted without using a guide in the search. For example, the code ‘conservatism’ was extracted, as can be seen below in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Conservatism indicated in Nvivo



Then the software calculated the coverage of the ‘conservatism’ code. This process can be viewed in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Conservatism frequency in Nvivo



A list of codes was developed with a definition and an excerpt from the interview from which the code was extracted (‘Conservatism’ is shown on Table 7). For a more developed list of codes, see Appendix 23.

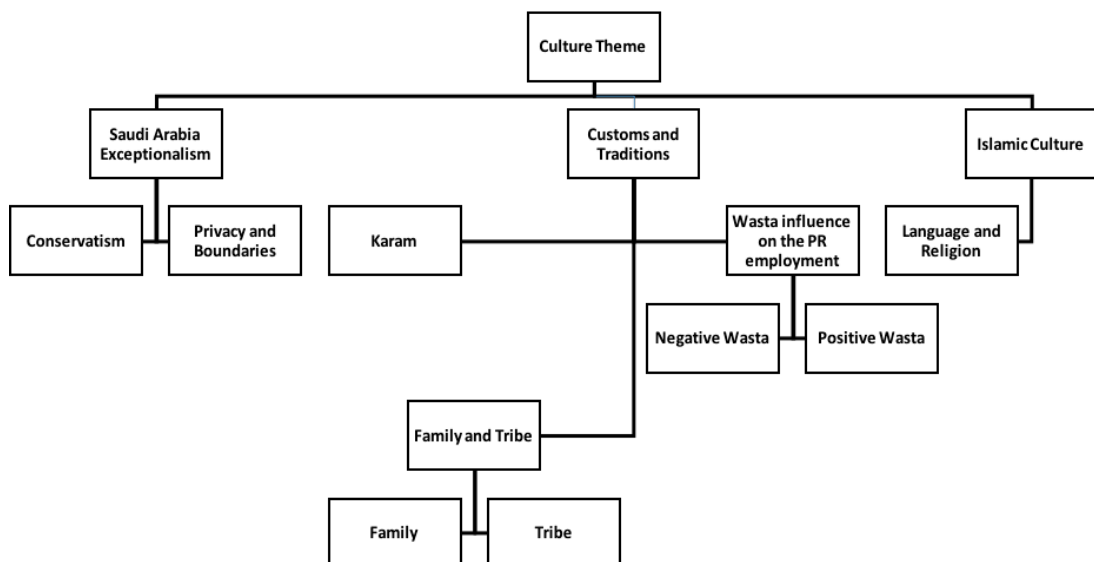
Table 7: Definition and excerpt of interview

Code	Definition	Example
Conservatism	conservatism refers to	P 7: “I think Saudi society has a

	society's strict boundaries, such as privacy, gender separation, commitment to religion and culture, preserving traditions.	unique characteristic. For example, being a conservative and religious society, this is one of the unique characteristics and also keeping the customs and Saudi traditions and protect it from disappearing."
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The codes were sorted into potential categories. For example, conservatism and privacy and boundaries formed the category 'Saudi Arabia exceptionalism', as can be seen in Figure 6, below.

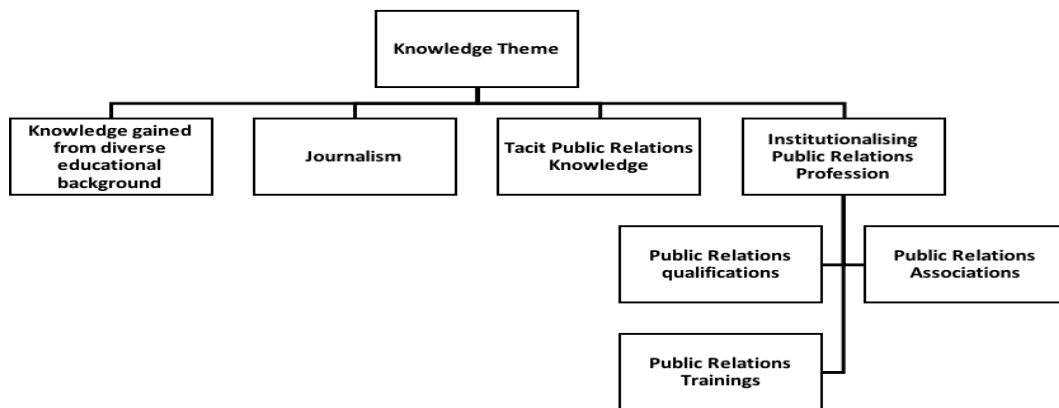
Figure 6: Culture theme chart



In this thesis, themes were extracted from each research question. For example, the first research question was (What key concepts do Saudi Arabian PR practitioners employ in their work? What knowledge do they possess and use, is it a shared knowledge, and are PR practitioners aware of their PR duties, and how do they utilise their knowledge in their practice?). The knowledge theme has been taken from

this question, in order to find out the answer to the research question. The thesis has found several categories in this theme: journalism, and institutionalising the PR profession (see Appendix 3 for the codes list). The second stage of this thesis, the inductive research, two categories in the knowledge theme have emerged: knowledge gained from various academic disciplines, tacit PR knowledge and hands-on knowledge. For a visual representation of the knowledge theme, Figure 7 can be consulted below.

Figure 7: Knowledge theme chart



The second research question revolved around the culture subject, which had the purpose of examining how PR practitioners' work is influenced by Saudi Arabian culture, particularly in relation to how customs, language, institutions, and religion affects their practice. The categories that emerged, following the questions as a guide, are customs and traditions, Islamic culture, *karam*, family and tribe, negative *wasta*. The codes that emerged from the inductive research are: exceptionalism, privacy and boundaries, positive *wasta*, language and religion. In each theme, the relationship between each category was made by analysing all the data. The culture theme is represented in a visual chart in Figure 6.

The third research question was focused on the public communication subject, which has been taken from the research aims with the purpose of positioning PR practices within the Saudi Arabian traditions of public communication, such as freedom of speech, censorship, self-censorship, government control of media, media freedom. The categories in this theme are censorship, journalists and media relations. The categories found through inductive research were self-censorship as a positive guide in communication work. The public communication theme can be viewed in Figure 3.

4.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were dealt with in the interviewing process. Bryman (2012) stated that a research has to consider issues that might appear during the research: the risk of harming the participants, offering full information about the research objectives, ensuring their privacy is respected and ensuring no deception is involved. The researcher can ensure this by asking for an informed consent sheet, keeping names confidential and, finally, ensuring there is no deception involved in the research (see Appendix 5 for the consent form). The names were coded accordingly, respondents' names were given a number, such as Participant 1, and the names of the organisations were also kept anonymous in order to keep personal data private. These ethical considerations were discussed in an ethical approval form that was submitted to Queen Margaret University.

From the beginning of the study, permission was taken from all the participants. The participants were also given the right to speak openly, ask questions, and they had the right to not answer a question if it made them feel uncomfortable. PR practitioners are usually concerned with issues, decisions and strategies that are viewed by the companies that employ them as being private and commercially sensitive. To solve these issues, participants were assured that the information they revealed, their names, and the name of the organisation would be confidential. This thesis has therefore taken into account the Queen Margaret University (2003) data protection policy, which states that the research must be carried out in such a way that it will not have consequences on individuals who participate in the research.

Moreover, the processing of personal data is done in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the 1998 Act. The Data Protection Act stated that the researchers have the right to prevent processing which might cause damage or distress. The Act states that the processing of those data or their processing for that purpose or in that manner is causing or is likely to cause substantial damage or substantial distress to him or to another. Moreover, damage or distress is or would be unwarranted (Queen Margaret University 2003).

This thesis has respected the anonymity of the participants involved in the interviews, according to the (Queen Margaret University 2003) data protection policy, which states that:

In order to avoid subject access provisions, the results of research or statistics should be 'anonymised' as far as possible, i.e., should not be recorded in a form which identifies the individuals concerned. Wherever possible, researchers should follow a principle of 'anonymity' in handling personal data. (Queen Margaret University 2003, p.3)

Individuals were not excluded or preferred who came from a certain ethnicity or tribe. The interviews were saved with a digital recorder, and the digital archive generated during the interviews was stored in the university website in a private account. No other copies were saved on any other personal computer. The physical copies of the signed forms and the hard copy of the interviews were stored within the facilities of Queen Margaret University. In accordance with Queen Margaret University rules, the interview transcripts will be destroyed after five years of the study's completion. This section has looked at the ethical issues that this type of thesis meets and explained how problems associated with these ethical matters were prevented. It is now necessary to explain the limitations of the study.

4.9 Limitations of the study

This thesis has a number of limitations in relation to the chosen research methodology and sampling technique. One of the limitations that this study has met is related to the qualitative methods. Qualitative methods have been accused of being subjective, complex to reproduce and deficient in transparency (Walsh 2001; Kumar

2011). Thomas (2000) has stated that, in interviews, there is the risk of researchers imposing their views upon the interviewees. In order to minimise this possible limitation, the interviews must be conducted using open, non-directive questions. Participants were thus given the chance to offer more details relating to questions referring, for example, to cultural features that affect their practice or an insight into how they practise self-censorship. These limitations were addressed by considering the constructivist theory, which means the interviewees build their own realities and therefore an objective reality does not exist.

Another limitation, such as the interviewer's bias due to the interviewer effect, age, education and sensitive questions, was reduced by explaining to participants that their answers would not be viewed as offensive through personal and flexible interviewing techniques (West and Blom 2016). In order to validate the information, member checking or respondent validation will be considered as part of data (Richards 2005) (see Appendix 2 for member checking emails) (Hox 1993; West and Blom 2016). An additional limitation is the fact that the thesis does not offer female's views on PR in SA, as has been explained previously, as due to cultural constraints and the snowball sampling the researcher was not able to include women in the interview process. Another limitation that this study took into consideration is related to the fact that people may not have been able to reflect upon and discuss their own culture, because they might not have been aware of some of the cultural features that are specific to SA. The solution was to point out certain features in the culture. Additionally, the researcher has taken into account the fact that similarity with the culture might influence the interpretation of the results. The critical distance was achieved through consultation with the supervisors and usage of a systematic analysis, such as coding. This section has analysed the possible limitations of the study, such as privacy and access issues, and discussed how these limitations were prevented. The final section of this chapter addresses the relevance of the study.

4.10 Relevance of the study

In examining the relevance of this thesis, a discussion of the main subject of the study is needed. The existing research on PR in SA has so far focused on examining

how the culture, political and economic environment influence PR practice in SA and in the Emirates using Grunig PR models (Abdelhay 2014), Alanazi (2013) has analysed PR practice in Saudi universities, Al Fehad (1998) has examined PR practitioners in government ministries, Al-Jaralh (2011) and Al-Qahtani (2004) studied PR practitioners facing crisis, and Al-Eissa (2012) has evaluated the professionalism of PR in SA. The reason for choosing SA for this particular study is that there is little research on the Saudi Arabian PR practice in relation to the Saudi Arabian culture and public communication. This study therefore reveals the state of the PR occupation within the context of Saudi Arabian society's culture and the public communication context, and the influence of culture and public communication on PR practice.

The main reasons for conducting this study are:

- To identify the conceptual frameworks (what PR knowledge they possess, how it is used, if it is knowledge shared among practitioners) that practitioners use in their work.
- To provide researchers and PR practitioners with in-depth information regarding the cultural context that influences PR practice in SA (such as Saudi cultural customs, traditions, language, Islamic culture, and how Islam shapes Saudi culture).
- To reveal and investigate public communicational factors that influence PR practice (such as censorship, self-censorship, media relations).

4.11 Conclusion

This thesis fills the gap in the literature that has failed to provide insights on the conceptual frameworks that practitioners use in Saudi Arabia, taking account of the influence of cultural and public communication factors. Key research questions were developed on the subject of culture, knowledge and public communication features in relation to PR in SA and about how these features affect every day practice and are viewed by PR officers working in SA. The thesis has also provided a list of aims

and objectives. The chapter has given an insight into the research methods and philosophical paradigm utilized in the thesis, such as the reasons why the research uses the constructivist paradigm when examining the Saudi PR practitioners' perceptions of Saudi culture. This thesis uses the constructivist paradigm by examining the multiple views of PR practitioners from both private and public organisations in SA. The following chapter presents the reflective report on data collection trip in SA.

Chapter 5: Reflective report on data collection trip in Saudi Arabia

As stated in the previous chapter a reflective report was created for this research with the purpose of showing a deeper understanding of PR practitioners' world view. The report gives insights into the research experience and aids transparency to the research process. Ortlipp (2008) stated that reflective reports are as well used in constructivist researches. Providing a reflective report gives the chance for the researcher to share the research experience and feelings throughout the research process (Ortlipp 2008). As well, a reflective journal determines the researchers' experience and views and beliefs to be part of the research process (Ortlipp 2008). Russell and Kelly (2002) pointed out that a reflective report is useful because the subjectivity of the researcher can improve the quality of the research. The authors claimed that when gathering information throughout the research process the information gathered reflects the subjective perspective of the researcher and the participants. These perspectives help to understand their views of the world and it influences the research process. The purpose of a reflective journal ultimately is to determine the researcher to examine himself in order to be able to differentiate himself from the research. A reflective report allows the researcher to express the researcher and the participants' views and through these social interactions to create an environment that gives more meaning and understanding of the research process (Russell and Kelly 2002). According to Etherington (2004) the reflective journal is helpful because "Unacknowledged negative thoughts and feelings may block our ability to hear participants clearly or may influence how we make sense of what we are hearing." (Etherington 2004, p. 128). Writing a reflective journal can also make the researcher become aware of their own bias (Etherington 2004). As it has been shown therefore, a reflective journal is highly useful and it was considered important given the subject of the thesis and the methodological research used. The reflective report is presented in the next section.

5.1 Identifying participants

For this data collection trip initially I have contacted three PR practitioners so I can practise the snowball technique. I have noticed the snowball technique gave me the opportunity to reach many PR practitioners. I chose three people and not one just one person because I did not want to be biased and choose individuals from the same circle. I thought three PR practitioners can give me participants from different circles. One of them is a professor in the Media and Communication faculty in Saudi Arabia and through him I contacted PR practitioners who teach in universities. The second person is a PR manager in one of the government institutions and he has many PR contacts in the private companies and also in the government and through him I reached many practitioners. The third contact was a personal contact and through him I reached the PR department in his institution. Through these PR practitioners I have managed to get another 24 participants to agree to be interviewed. During the period July-August I have managed to interview 27 PR practitioners. Other participants will be interviewed in September, due to their availability.

The first two weeks I tried to organise the meetings with the participants, such as establishing suitable dates and locations. At the beginning of the research I was nervous because this was my first experience in doing interviews face to face. I was nervous because I was afraid the respondents will not give me helpful answers for my research and my research will not bring anything new. I also noticed that PR employees were not confident and they were not experienced in PR so that made me nervous.

At the first interview I met a very relaxed person that asked me “Do you want me to say the reality or good things about PR in Saudi Arabia?” and I responded “if you want to help me you should say the truth about PR practice and the real situation of PR.”. I think he helped me somehow from what he said because when I introduced myself to the other interviewees, I told them from the beginning without them asking me, to tell me the truth about PR in order to help me in the research. Most of the participants were helpful and wanted to do something good for me.

My interviews started with an introduction. I told the participants “Be comfortable, don’t be stressed. I don't want you to polish the image of PR because it's clear for everyone so I want you to tell me the truth about PR and this will help me in the research”. When I told them this introduction they felt pity and accepted and told me the truth. They started later telling me- “don't worry, I will tell you everything about PR. I noticed they were not scared of telling the truth, even they were not scared of their manager. For example, if the manager said something to show off, they would say the opposite.

5.2. Cultural factors in choosing snowballing

I have noticed that the majority of participants initially did not want to participate in this study due to several reasons, such as claiming that they do not have PR duties so they do not fit the profile and that they would not help the study with answers. Some felt that they would waste their time and there would be no profit or advantages for them for doing the interview. Some people said that they would not normally accept to participate but because I met them through other people that we both knew personally they accepted. One of the interviewees tried to avoid participating in the study because he said to me: “I am not going to provide a good answer and I'm not able to help your study so look for someone who is practicing good PR”. I told him “I need to know what you are doing and this is the most important answer for my study”.

Some participants saw it hard to do the interview during the holy month of Ramadan because if they talk a lot they would be thirsty. This is why most interviews took place in the evening, at night or after the holiday ended.

I started contacting possible participants by e-mail, explaining the study to them and after that I send them another e-mail to tell them that we should organize a time or date to meet and chat about the PR experience and I asked them to give me their phone numbers to have a fast and direct communication and to set a place to meet. Some of them asked me to come to their workplace, and others preferred to do it outside of their workplace in a coffee shop or in their house to have more privacy. Some of the people that I sent email answered the first time, then they started to

ignore my calls. At this point I realised that without the snowball technique I would not have reached some PR practitioners due to their busy schedule.

I contacted one of the potential participants through Twitter. I did not know him personally and I did not know anyone common with him. I did not use the snowball technique when I contacted him because I believed he is a famous PR practitioner in Saudi Arabia and he has special knowledge on the practice as he had appearances on TV where he discussed PR. Therefore, I asked him to participate in the research 3 months prior my interviews. During these three months I have tried to set up a date with him to discuss about PR and every time he said he agreed to participate. However, when I wanted to set the date he stopped answering the messages. I did not give up and I wanted him to tell me clearly if he wants to do the interview. I was very frustrated and he shook my confidence. It took me two months to set a date with this person and he did not give me a phone number. He made me feel unaccepted and he probably felt scared his image will be affected. When I finally met him, I asked him half of the questions and he still disrupted the interview due to personal reasons. I was very annoyed because he treated like I was not important and he talked on the phone and was checking his messages all the time. I was not satisfied with this interview because I was used to the other participants who dedicated their time to help me. However, I still used the interview in my data.

This experience made me think that the snow ball technique is most suitable for interviewing Saudi people and without it I will not manage to contact any other participants. This technique is useful in Saudi because this culture of shame exists and if one person asks someone to do a favour they will accept in fear of dishonouring them, out of shame. I think this technique is best because it would make them feel comfortable and secure because I contact them through a person they trust and know.

5.3. Interviews in Saudi Arabia as a particular cultural dimension

There is a certain cultural dimension to doing interviews in Saudi Arabia. I had a certain routine at the beginning of every interview. Before every interview, if the interview was held in a cafe or the lobby of the hotel, I went in advance before the participant would come and I looked for a quiet and suitable place for conversation. I ordered drinks for us and most interviewees were surprised and said that I shouldn't do that and that they should invite me as I come from another country to do the interviews.

The first 5 minutes when I meet them, they started to talk about the people that send them to me. After that I tried to move on to the interview. Before every interview I always say to the participant: "if you allow me, I want to record this conversation, I will translate it and I will put the name and organisation in a code way to not be known for other people and not to hurt you". Some agreed and other did not care much about this subject. I always started my interviews by saying everything will be secure and anonymous and I told them to not be stressed and not to talk in pure Arabic and be relaxed.

I have noticed that if I said that I want to do an interview some participants would be very nervous but when I changed my approach and said I wanted to have a chat about PR they were comfortable and willing to do it. I have also realised some PR practitioners have different backgrounds not in PR, such as food science and agriculture. Interviews were held with people that have different positions in the PR field: manager of media and PR department, manager of PR section, PR employees. I chose to interview people that worked in different positions because I wanted to see how they view their work because I wanted to see different views on PR.

I have observed the PR manager is always aware of all activities of PR, but PR employees are specialised in one thing only. For example, one is responsible with collecting guests from the airport. One interviewee said: "I am one of the best PR employees in the PR department because when I go to the airport I finish all the procedures for the guests in 5 minutes. That was really appreciated by guests and PR

managers. However, don't ask me about the rest of the PR activities, like editing or PR campaigns because I am not aware”.

I have noticed that the majority of the interviewees during the questions related to culture, they started to fidget in their seats and clearing their throats and staying for a while to think after that asking me to repeat the question. This behaviour was not showed while asking other questions. The last question (number 41) related to the fact that PR practitioners should have a PR Bachelor degree when entering PR, I noticed the participants that do not have this background started to be defensive and they were confused when answering, they were tense. Some participants used to say “Thank God” when mentioning anything good that happened to them in the past and when talking about the experience. When discussing the sensitive issue of Wasta, one of the participants was embarrassed and he took it personally, smiled and recognised that he was involved in this type of habit.

From all my interviewees one participant was my favourite because he was giving complex, detailed answers support them with examples, despite the fact he did not have an educational background in PR.

One day I had an interview with a PR employee in his office in the PR department. I was planning to do an interview with this employee and the manager in the same day. Because the manager was not available I interviewed the employee. The interview was going well, however we were interrupted in the middle of the interview by the manager who took no consideration for my work and he asked me to come to his office to do the interview because he needed to leave the office. The employee was not happy about the situation and agreed with interrupting. I felt the manager was not respectful and treating his employee with arrogance. I felt the employee tried to be diplomatic but I could see he was hiding his anger.

The attitude of the participants varied. Some of them were a bit frightened and nervous about the interview while others were far more relaxed. For example, one employee asked me to go in a private room because he was afraid other colleagues will listen and he would not say the reality and his answer will be influenced if others listen to his answers. So, when we went in a private room he started to talk in a

relaxed way and when I asked him about the company management and their relationship with the PR department (question 12) the participant turned his back and checked the door and talked about the management and how they do not understand their work and how it is their fault why PR is not developed in the country.

The majority of the participants when I meet them the first time they started to welcome me in a warm way and kiss my cheeks. In Saudi culture when you meet someone that you knew before, you greet someone by shaking hands and by touching cheek to cheek. This usually happens when you know the person before and you did not see them for a long time but never when you meet someone for the first time. I think the warm welcoming is done because the common person we both knew was close to both of us. Some of the highly educated PR practitioners react with arrogance, while the others are modest.

5.4. Managing the interview relationship

Some participants were annoyed due to the length of the interview. Some spent two hours and the average was one hour and a half. One interviewee said: “Are we going to stay all night?”. another one said: “You have so many questions”, another one said in the middle of the interview: “Did we finish?”. I felt quite frustrated at their lack of patience but I tried to remain focus on my job as I did not have any choice. Explanation for why some interviews took longer is because I had to explain some questions related to culture, such as what they would see as a sensitive subject in their culture.

I must confess I also had plenty of positive experiences during my interviews. For example, I did an interview with one person that was very helpful. He even went with me to another place to ask his former colleagues to do an interview with me. When I finished the interview, this person was waiting for me and offered to help me with anything I needed. It was really great and I felt so happy. The participants were confident and were also comfortable with answering all questions and they were not conservative about answering. Some participants, when I finished they gave me gifts. Some offered jobs for me. I felt this job offer is just a compliment and not an honest

offer. It just showed they are welcoming and interested in me. I felt they said it because they liked me personally.

Some of the PR managers tried to show that they are doing a good PR job and they have good communication with the higher management. However, their employees revealed the opposite.

I realised some were nervous, especially the employees because they are not confident in what they do because they do not have a PR background. Some were afraid of criticism or that they will not be able to answer well. One interviewee started to crack his fingers and another interviewee stayed in an uncomfortable way like he was going to present the news, he was visibly nervous. Another interviewee was talking in pure Arabic and normally all Saudi people talk in Saudi Arabian language because pure Arabic is usually used on the official national television. I believe the behavior was probably due to the effect of seeing the record tape.

During my interviews I sometimes felt that when I ask questions the interviewees were not educated enough to understand the questions even everything was clear. I felt they were not good participants and I was surprised how they work in PR. I must admit I was scared they would ruin my research. Many times I needed to explain the clear questions and this made me waste time and I felt frustrated because it took me a long period to finish the interview. One PR practitioner when I asked him clear questions his face reaction showed me he was confused and scared what to answer. Therefore, I tried to relax him and tell him to take a deep breath, and not to rush with the answer and just remember how it happened. But with I still could see he was not fine, even they say he said he felt good. He did not look confident and looked scared.

But when he answered his answers were satisfactory so I was surprised he reacted like that. I think he felt like he has to answer a right answer and he thought there is one specific answer he has to say and was scared not to say the wrong thing. When I saw him not being confident I told him the right answer is just to say to talk about his experience.

I noticed when I told the participants that what they said is really interesting, they were happy to talk more and I started to use this trick to make them talk more always I used my face reaction and showed that I was amazed and really interested, even if the answers were not interesting. I tried to make them confident.

I think the majority of them did not have the courage to talk in front of someone or to be recorded. I think this is due to the culture effect, cultural restrictions such as not questioning the elders, not talking to them and just listening and being obedient. When the participants started the interview some of them were a bit not confident and reacted confident to show him I am close to you, don't be stressed. And I talked with Saudi accent because the questions were written in pure Arabic. In writing Saudi Arabians always write in pure Arabic and not with an accent. When participants heard pure Arabic they heard the official language and formal language which is a bit intimidating. When I saw them feeling stressed and confused, I repeated the question in a Saudi way to make them not feel stressed. And when I say it in this way, they were understood. I think I made them feel more relaxed because I did not show them an official person who criticizes them and they would feel in trouble if they did not give me a correct answer. One of the participants was worried about me recording the conversation and that made me think that he's not going to be relaxed and I tried to relax him and told him to calm down, and explain that his name will be secure and the name of the organisation's name will be secure so he started to feel comfortable.

Some participants decided to stop the interview because they were busy and wanted to continue in another time. For example, one interviewee received a phone call in the middle of the interview and when he finished from the call he told me: "this is the minister. I have to go, we will continue another time". Other interviewee asked me every five minutes during the interview if he could go finish something related to work. In the middle of the interview he said: "Sorry I will continue the interview another time".

I noticed the participants that teach and practise PR in some institutions; they are arrogant and not confident. They are not rich in information about PR practices or activities. I think they were scared I might find out they are not good at PR. For example, one of the participants asked me to meet him in the newspaper office where he's working as a part time job and he stayed in a big office just to show off. He started to talk about himself and about how it is important to be working in a different field and to be knowledgeable and also teaching students in university and also practising in an organisation. He talked with confidence but his answers and activities were not what I thought. I thought he was practicing PR but he was practising Saudi PR, media relations and organising events. He said that there are too many questions in the interview and why did my supervisor agree to this and how this interview is not academic. He exasperated me, but I trust myself and the supervisors.

In one of the interviews while I was interviewing, one of the colleagues came in the room to watch the interview. I was not upset but I felt he was naive and he thought we are just having a chat about PR so I was afraid he will influence the participant's answers so I said in a friendly way: "if you would like to participate in the study I will be happy to interview you, but this is a personal interview, if you could leave us to have privacy and to be comfortable."

Some said the high management does not pay attention to them. One interviewee told me that PR is confusing in Saudi Arabia because of how it was introduced by Egyptians in Saudi Arabia and how they translated PR. They said the word- public relations is translated as general relations and this confuses the public. One interviewee told me we will meet at one o'clock and after one hour I called him. I waited another hour for him and then when we did the interview he interrupted many times for phone calls and then interrupted the interview in the middle.

One participant when I asked him to tell me about his experience in his job, he tried to tell me the ideal and not what exactly what they were doing. I felt he was trying to hide what is going on in their department or maybe he was ashamed and they are not

doing PR. I tried to solve this issue by asking him directly; “What happens in your department? How you start your day? “He liked to talk about nonsense stuff and going out of the question and far from the answer and all the problems I tried to bring him back. I did not want to hurt him and I tried to bring him in a nice way to not let him feel he does not understand the questions. I did it in another way. I kept adding questions- how, why is the management not giving you budget. If he tried to go far from the question, I lead him back to the subject. Sometimes some people asked me- can you give me example and I said I don't want to influence the answer. I knew if I give example I will influence the answer. I tried to explain the question to make it clear.

The interviews that I held were all different. One of them felt a bit like a chore. For example, when I started the interview with this person, the conversation was forced and he tried to control the interview. He asked to see my questions and said: “OK, here in the communication questions I will say one word which is enough for these questions.” I said he should answer to all of them and he said he did not want to because he does not like them. I felt he was forced to participate because of the friend that called him and tried to finish as fast as possible.

One of the more unusual issues I have met during the interview was when some of the participants came wearing casual clothes or shorts due to high heat and I was wearing office clothes. They were a bit surprised and said that they thought I will be dressed casual as I am studying in UK and they apologised and felt embarrassed because they were not wearing office clothes. However, that did not bother me at all.

All participants have asked at the end of the interview my opinion on their performance and my opinion on their PR practice. For example, one interviewee asked my opinion on his PR activity compared to western PR. Another PR practitioner said: (what do you think about my responses? How can you evaluate our job? Are we good or not?).

On one of the interviews I have scheduled the manager of the department and one employee of the department. When I finished the interview with the manager, the work day has finished so I had to go home and return the next day to interview the employee. The next day I entered the PR department of the same institution and I met the manager. The manager asked me what I wanted again and I told him I wanted to interview the employee and he told the employee: (Hey, come! Good luck! You will be bored). I was not happy with the way he acted, but I did not react or say anything and I smiled and went to the interview.

I think most interviews went better than expected because they were telling me about the issues, they were not hiding it and I was afraid they will not tell me the truth. They were happy and they told me the wrong way of handling PR and how they wanted to bring solutions.

5.5. Conclusion

In providing the reflective report, the author of the thesis has shown how the process of research underwent and the difficulties and obstacles that were met in collecting the data from the participants, such as the fact that some participants were easy to reach and some proved to be more difficult to meet. As well, the report has shown how the researcher has tried to reduce bias and to communicate efficiently with the purpose of finding out more useful information. The report has also provided useful information on cultural behaviour when conducting research in the country of Saudi Arabia. The following chapter examines the data that was extracted from the interviews, by using diverse methods of coding.

Chapter 6: Understanding Saudi Arabian public relations practice.

The interrelationship between knowledge, culture and public communication

This chapter focuses on analysing the data that was extracted from the interviews, using the methods of open, axial and thematic coding. The codes were extracted in two stages. The first stage used deductive analysis, which took into consideration the research questions, and the second stage was inductive analysis, which extracted codes without using the research questions as a guide. The data was analysed using the constructivist paradigm in order to determine how PR practitioners view their social world, their public communication context and to understand how they acquire their knowledge and how they use it in every day practice. This paradigm was used alongside Vygotsky's socio-cultural approach, which focuses on how educational institutions influence individuals' intelligence and it therefore helped the research focus on the ways in which PR officers practice and how they acquire their knowledge.

In terms of the concepts of 'profession' and 'professionalisation', the interpretation of the data was done through the view of theories related to the concepts of profession and professionalisation and their relationship to PR, e.g., Larson (1977), Friedson (1983), Abbott (1988) and Kurtz (1998), Sudaby and Viale (2011), in order to understand if PR in SA can be considered a profession or an occupation, how educational institutions and associations contribute to the development of the PR occupation through providing education and training, and through engaging the occupation in the process of professionalisation.

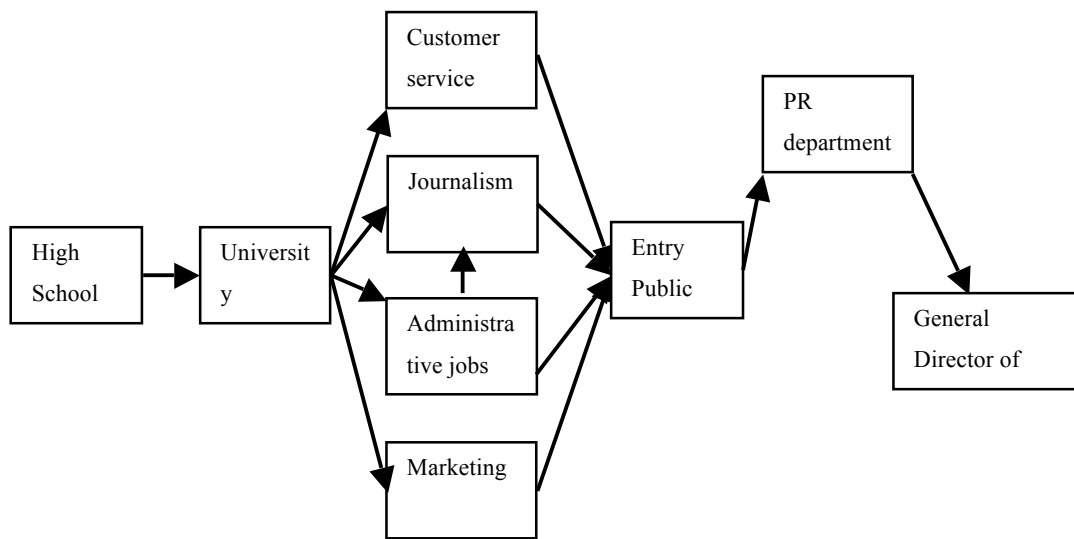
The chapter is structured under three major themes: knowledge, culture and public communication. The chapter begins with a description of the interview participants. Then, it continues with the knowledge theme, which gives an insight into what PR

practitioners know and where they get their knowledge from. The knowledge theme includes four categories: knowledge gained from various academic disciplines, journalism, tacit PR knowledge, hands-on knowledge and institutionalising the PR profession. Next, the thesis examines the culture theme, which offers a view into the Saudi Arabian cultural features that affect society and work practices, including the PR field. The culture theme has three categories: Saudi Arabian exceptionalism, customs and traditions, and Islamic culture. Finally, the third theme, which is called public communication, aims to position PR practices within the Saudi Arabian traditions of public communication. This theme includes censorship, self-censorship as a positive guide to communication work, and media relations.

6.1 An analysis of the interview participants

On closer examination, as can be seen in the model below (Figure 8), the participants who graduated from a university PR programme or started with a different degree have followed the PR career path, starting as PR officers and becoming either PR managers or PR executives (participants 12,20,21,6,15 19). Several participants who graduated in unrelated degrees have continued their careers in different sectors, such as sales, then marketing, and then entered the PR field. Other participants worked in the media and then became PR officers. The diagram shows the weak state of the professional project as there are no barriers or control points for people who wish to enter the occupational group. It is also noticeable that no participant started in PR as their first job.

Figure 8: Public relations career path model

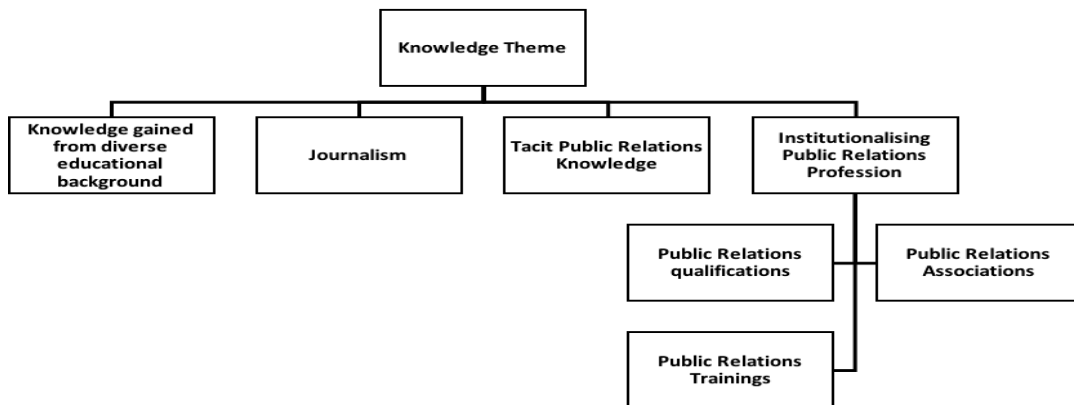


In this section the thesis looked at some of the characteristics of the sample, and in the following sections the thesis will examine how these differences appeared by using the coding and themes.

6.2 Knowledge theme

This section focuses on the knowledge that PR practitioners have, and the knowledge that they use in their everyday practice. The knowledge theme includes categories such as knowledge gained from graduating from a different educational background, journalism, tacit PR knowledge, hands-on knowledge and institutionalising the PR profession (see Figure 9 for more details). This diverse work background has had an influence on participants' knowledge, and the section that follows will examine the type of knowledge that participants have and how it is utilised.

Figure 9: Structure of the knowledge theme



The first theme, **knowledge gained from various academic disciplines**, means knowledge gained through graduating from diverse degrees, such as an administration degree or an agricultural degree, or any other type of degree (see Appendix 7 for quotations that reflect the knowledge gained from various academic disciplines). Data showed that no matter which degree individuals have, they will transfer some of the knowledge into their PR practice. For example, the analysis shows that an individual who learnt administration will use the knowledge gained, such as organising documents and protocol duties, in their PR work. Participant 2 stated that:

I studied business administration and this degree helped me to be aware about the law, marketing and the administration, and I learned how to deal with people. In the PR department I am aware of this, because you need it.

The knowledge that was seen as being beneficial to PR practice by the practitioners can be taken from any educational background and then adapted to PR practice. For example, education, such as a psychology degree, is seen as being helpful in mediating relationships, especially those with the media. The fact that PR practitioners in SA have a diverse educational background is not viewed as a

negative factor, because practitioners use the knowledge learnt in school to their advantage. Participant 14 stated:

My educational background is Arabic language and I entered media and PR through the university and school events. When I was at the school and university I used to take part in organising events and would do some media work. When I was in the university I was responsible for organising events, and responsible for the magazine and the newspaper. If you look at the Arabic language knowledge you will notice there is a strong link with the work of the media through the high quality of the writing of the Arabic language. The ones who have the Arabic language degree will be able to frame the message in an effective way, and this is exactly what the journalist is doing.

Diverse educational backgrounds, such as psychology and administration, have been viewed as being beneficial, but media and journalism, in particular, have been seen as a door way into a PR career, although, the interviews suggest that the level of education attained is not important in recruiting.

The next theme, '**journalism**', is displayed in Appendix 8 (see the Appendix for a table showing interview quotations that reflect the 'journalism' theme). Interviewees believe PR and journalism belong to the same field. Moreover, journalism, as work experience, and journalism studies and skills, such as editing, writing, framing and knowing how to communicate with the press, are seen as valuable in PR practice because PR practitioners believe that a journalism background is helpful in dealing with the media and communicating with the public. The interviews suggest that a PR practitioner who has worked as a journalist will know how to adapt their press release according to the media outlet that they send it to, and this means their article will be published. The opposite, a practitioner who is not aware of this practice, may not be as skilful at adapting the press release and thus their work will be less successful. Participant 8 said:

As a PR officer you need to adopt the policy of each newspaper to avoid cutting your news. For me, personally, when I send news to the newspaper, it always gets published in the same condition, and the main reason for not cutting my text is because I understand what journalists want from me.

Several interviewees believe that journalism knowledge and experience are considered compulsory for PR practitioners when entering the field. Participant 8 said:

If I had power I would not let anyone enter the PR field without taking a journalism course, and I would also make him work for a while as a journalist to give the PR officer an idea about what is happening in the journalism world.

Another category extracted from the interviews is ‘**tacit PR knowledge and hands-on knowledge**’ (see Appendix 9 for a table showing quotations that reflect the tacit public relations knowledge theme and hands-on knowledge theme). As the interviews have shown, practical experience is highly valued in the PR field in SA, and practitioners transfer any knowledge that is found useful in their everyday experience. Thus, tacit knowledge in PR practice in SA is defined by being sociable and charismatic and hands-on knowledge by writing press releases, protocol work, press clipping.

Respondents do not view experience and theoretical knowledge as being different concepts, but they view them as concepts that rely on each other and help individuals to perform better in their jobs. The category can be explained by the fact that PR practitioners claim that they learn more from their everyday job, from their everyday experiences, and when they go to PR courses they are mainly interested in learning from other PR practitioners’ experience and are not interested in learning about theories. Participants therefore believe that individuals can come into the field without having PR knowledge and they can learn at the job. Moreover, personal qualities, such as charisma, are considered more valuable in this field, as Participant 11 revealed:

The most important [thing] is to be prepared psychologically and to have the charisma of PR practitioners because you need to be sociable in order to become successful. The practitioner needs to be open minded, friendly, to have a positive, happy appearance. All these qualities are the ideal of what PR practitioners should be, but they should support these qualities with some theoretical knowledge of PR.

This interviewee views charisma as an essential quality for the PR job and seems to view theoretical knowledge as more of an optional requirement. This suggests that social qualities that are part of the individual personality are more valued than knowledge that can be acquired. This leads to the question: how does the recruitment process work if personal qualities are valued more and, how can the efficiency of a practitioner be evaluated. However, it seems that Participant 11 contradicts himself, as he says PR practitioners can enter the field without needing PR knowledge but, at the same time, he points out that personal skills should be supported by PR knowledge. Participant 11 stated that:

One of the most important things is to mix knowledge and practice. To be knowledgeable in PR without knowing what to practise, you would not be the ideal practitioner. For example, there are many successful PR practitioners who are not educated in PR, but they support themselves and develop themselves with some training in PR.

The respondent suggests that courses and continuous training in PR are useful and efficient, even for practitioners who are already successful in their careers. It also seems to point out that individuals who do not have a background education in PR, such as a university degree in PR, can become successful, which points to the fact that what the university offers to students is not useful knowledge. However, private courses that practitioners attend are efficient. This practitioner is aware of the importance of knowledge and points out, indirectly, which providers of knowledge are useful. The interviews also indicate that PR practitioners share knowledge amongst themselves. Participant 4, who graduated from a university PR programme, admitted to guiding and helping his fellow colleagues. He stated that he teaches his employees PR knowledge and editing.

According to several interviewees, real PR knowledge is actually gained from practising PR. Experience thus helps practitioners, not theories, and that is where true knowledge comes from. Practical information is therefore more useful than theoretical information. The reason why PR practitioners attend private training offered by private companies is thus to learn from other PR practitioners' experience, and not with the purpose of learning about theories (see additional relevant

quotations from Participants 4,12 in Appendix 12). However, not all private courses are useful, and PR practitioners look to avoid those that are organised by the Saudi PR Association, because they want to learn from real life cases and are not interested in theories. Participant 9 stated:

You will meet the best PR practitioners in the region and you will learn practical knowledge from them and also you will win a good relationship with them. However, if we are with the Saudi PR Association we will not listen to practical experience, we will hear about only academic opinions, exactly like you are listening to a book, so you will not learn any new thing.

Participants revealed the need to learn and to update with new knowledge, and they were aware that PR practice continuously changes and that academic trainers seem to be unaware of the changing times and of the outdated information that they present. Participants choose trainers who offer practical information from their own experiences, rather than “theoretical information from the 1930s, which will not help me nowadays in the new era of the internet.” (Participant 6). As Participant 6 stated “Some private courses are not going to bring me any benefits, because the trainer is not experienced enough to tell us about PR. Sometimes I feel I know more than the trainer.” PR practitioners therefore pay close attention to which courses they go to, they check who organises the course, who attends it, and who does the training.

The data suggests that some participants are more outward than inward looking. In other words, participants are looking for professional support outside their country. For example, international PR associations were found to be helpful in providing useful updated information, and they seem to be a good networking and learning platform for those willing to succeed in the PR field. Unfortunately, several participants believe the local Saudi PR Association does not seem to be aware of what practitioners want and need, and this is why practitioners prefer to travel to attend International PR associations’ meetings, such as the Gulf Branch, the American PR Association and PR Society of America (as Participant 9 stated).

The findings of this study suggest that individuals do not need PR skills. Interviewees indicated that this is because PR skills are not necessary when doing

protocol duties. Participant 6 stated that “PR work does not need someone to have a degree in PR, because anyone can do this type of duties, or protocol duty.” This means PR practice was considered equal to protocol duties and public relations was sometimes labelled as being protocol in the interviews. Participants do not agree that it is a positive fact and they are aware that this should not be happening.

This is probably the reason why several participants agreed that any individual with social skills and a lack of PR knowledge can perform PR duties. Practitioners without a PR degree were defended by several research participants because charisma is one skill that can overtake an educated PR practitioner, and the reason given for that was because charismatic people have certain social skills that ease relationships and communication with publics. A clear distinction was made between what is the basis for practice, which is found in an individual’s personality and formal education. As an example, Participant 24 stated that:

The PR officer needs two things, to be talented and knowledgeable, but if you miss out the knowledgeable part you will be fine in PR, because you have the talent. For example, a talented PR practitioner who does not have a PR or media certificate, will have the skills of PR, which are to be friendly, sociable, smiling, smart. The PR practitioner needs to be tactful and have fast reactions.

For participants, a talented PR practitioner means a practitioner who was born with natural social skills and knows how to maintain relationships through being friendly and sociable. Formal education, such as a PR degree, does not seem to be useful for practitioners, even though they do believe it is important. Their answers seem to point out that in the debate between formal education and experience, experience definitely is more helpful in everyday practice, even when they look for academic improvement. The theoretical knowledge that PR practitioners possess seem to be a mixture of non-PR knowledge learnt in universities from which they graduated, that they adapt in their everyday experience, and knowledge taken from private PR courses. PR practitioners view their knowledge as being limited and they search to improve it by attending courses. According to interviewees, the non-PR knowledge learnt in the universities that they use consists of Arabic language, which is viewed

as useful in writing press releases, journalism, which is used in writing reports and maintaining relationships with the media, psychology, which is used in persuasion during PR campaigns. The knowledge taken from private PR courses consists of practical knowledge, such as learning how to create infographics and using smartphones in PR communication. However, PR practitioners value experience more than knowledge and for this reason it is important to examine why knowledge that comes from universities is not seen in a positive way.

It is important to see where PR qualification stands in this field and what are the roles of PR associations and private PR training in this field. For this reason, the thesis has extracted three codes: PR qualifications, PR associations and PR training. The three codes have formed the theme of **institutionalising PR profession**.

PR qualification is an important topic because institutionalising and recognising this occupation could help develop the field by allowing certified practitioners to practise (see Appendix 10 for relevant quotations that illustrate the public relations qualification theme). The insignificance of formal education was the strongest subject raised by participants in the research. Skills and experience were considered more useful than an educational background in PR. Despite this fact, practitioners still believe that any individual who is willing to go into the PR field should take an exam to be allowed to practise. This tension between theory and practice comes out again and again, and it will be more deeply explored in the next paragraph.

Some research participants seem to know what type of knowledge and skills individuals need to enter this field and to be successful in this area. However, they contradict themselves and believe that if more qualified PR practitioners were to enter the field, the PR sector would improve greatly. Interviewees blame PR practitioners with little knowledge for the poor academic base, and the PR field in SA seems to be a mixture of poorly prepared graduated PR practitioners and unqualified experienced PR practitioners. The subject of education sparked debates among the interviewees, because some practitioners regarded education as being important for PR practitioners, however, other participants highlighted the fact that

education is not helpful when practitioners lack experience in PR, and because what they have learnt in universities is not really helpful in real practice. It is important to look at the subject of education, as this can show how it can influence or help practitioners' work. On the other hand, interviewees have debated the usefulness of PR education in universities. Some interviewees considered it helpful because PR practitioners enter a field that is familiar to them, so they are aware of their future duties. It is debatable, however, what PR practitioners learn during their university years and if they find the PR sector similar. A future study into the PR materials that are studied in Saudi universities would probably offer more insight into this subject. Some interviewees, however, had the impression that PR programmes in universities are of low quality, because students read translated Western PR books and do not study theories that are suitable and adaptable to their economic and cultural context.

Another issue that has been highlighted is that there is a lack of qualified PR teachers. It has been revealed that "Arabic PR literature and knowledge is outdated and practitioners read English PR literature, because Saudi PR academic knowledge is not developed" (Participant 9). For this reason, real practice is seen as being different from what is taught in universities, for instance, "ethical practice, which, in theory, should be easy to apply but, in reality, practitioners have to be subjective and think of the company's interests" (Participant 8). It was found that when it is necessary to undertake research, some participants use research skills that were learnt in university. Participant 14 said:

The reasons why PR in Saudi Arabia is not developed is because the academic people in the university who teach PR are not practitioners. They have the knowledge without mixing it with practice, so they are not aware about the reality of PR in Saudi Arabia.

The interviewer points out that university professors teach outdated theories and not practical information. Another interviewer highlighted the differences between American PR universities, where they teach practical things, such as using smartphones, while in universities in SA they only limit practical learning for traditional things, like writing press releases (Participant 20). It is questionable however if PR practitioners need to attend universities for learning skills such as

using smartphones and if this type of modern skills could not be learned by attending training courses. Additionally, the issue is if universities should teach only practical knowledge and if PR practitioners should be involved in design education for academics.

Additionally, several interviewees also consider that a PR educational background is not helpful, as those who graduate do not have the experience to work in the field. The lack of PR practice during university years is also seen as being an issue. In universities when students have PR practice, this is actually focused on administrative work and not on PR duties (see Appendix 7 for quotations from Participants 8, 11). An important issue was highlighted by a participant, who suggested that PR higher education institutions give students the opportunity to practise PR, but this time is not spent to learn PR practice, such as how to organise campaigns, media relations, strategies, promotional events, but their time is actually spent doing administrative work. Participant 20 said:

We have 6 months of practice. However, your supervisor will take advantage of you and will use you for his personal matters, and sometimes he asks you to work at a conference, but not as a PR, as an administrative worker.

This reveals that it is not only universities that are responsible for this problem, but also companies that organise internships. Besides blaming higher education institutions for the low standards of the quality of PR, participants also blame Egyptian PR practitioners, who are present as a large percentage of the profession in SA. The interviews reveal that these practitioners have brought the Egyptian style of PR practice into this area, which consists of protocol and administration work, and seems to have influenced local PR practice, as Participant 26 revealed:

There is shallow awareness about PR and professional PR practice in Saudi Arabia. The reason why PR in Saudi Arabia is not professional is because of how PR historically came to Saudi Arabia. People who practise PR used to do only protocol and services duties, and this is the reason that PR is still not developed. Unfortunately, most PR practitioners in government institutions were Egyptians. The Egyptian practitioners used to distribute the newspapers to other departments in the organisation and work as drivers to pick up people from the airport. Even I worked with two Egyptian PR practitioners in my

former job, and one of the PR officers was a driver, and the other a camera man.

Participant 14 explained this fact further:

I believe one of the things that has made PR an unclear concept, and activities here in Saudi Arabia, is the meaning of PR in Arabic. In Arabic, we call it general relations, but it should be Relations with the Public. I believe, or I accuse, the Egyptians who brought PR, and they translated from English to Arabic and they did not succeed in this translation. When the Egyptians translated it to General Relations, people in Saudi Arabia started to give this department anything that is general, so they were not aware of the real activity and meaning of PR. For example, in Dubai, they change the name of the Department of PR to the Department of Identity and Communication.

Another practitioner blamed the underdevelopment on the fact that "PR as a knowledge and concept is quite new, and probably at the beginning in SA. Moreover, the PR field only copied the name PR, but did not try to actually copy the real life practice." (Practitioner 24). As Participant 24 revealed, the term 'PR' is misunderstood, and the term is used for non-PR activities, such as administration. It seems that there is no clear distinction between the term *PR* and the term *administration*. Perhaps this is why there is confusion in understanding the concept. Participant 14 stated:

The higher management is not aware of the term and the meaning of PR and also I accuse the translating of the term 'Public Relations' to Arabic that made people not understand what PR is and what their activity is, because of the vagueness of it. This bad translation made PR similar to the archive department.

In addition to discussing the term of PR, it is important to look at how **public relations associations** contribute to developing the PR knowledge of practitioners and their role in the professionalisation of this practice (see Appendix 11 for quotations that mention public relations associations). Participants state that, in SA, practitioners cannot just come together and form an association without being linked to a university. Additionally, associations need to be under the umbrella of the government and therefore academic individuals are responsible for their activities.

This creates particular problems and responses, and these points will be discussed in further detail in the following paragraphs.

There were divided opinions on the subject of associations, some participants seeing them as useless, as they do not provide support or do not offer knowledge. The PR association's activities are so reduced that some practitioners are unaware of its existence. Moreover, (Participant 2) stated that "when activities are organised, the PR Association does not announce this to its members so they can participate". Several interviewees revealed that official PR associations are created only to help their members' own careers. This means teaching a course or participating at a conference is helping them to advance in the institution, regardless of whether the course is successful or not. According to PR practitioners, the courses are not created for practical reasons, such as to help improve the PR field by offering training courses and consulting. This means organisers undertake any official activities, such as teaching theories, only to improve their personal social status in the business field, because, as individuals, they will be able to show to others in the field a large list of activities that they organised and a number of professional titles. This could lead to a higher position in a company and a higher social status. Participant 11 stated:

This membership is only prestige for the members and founders of this association. This is just to show off; they do not bring any benefits to the field of PR or communication. This association just helps the main people in the association for their own good and does not bring benefits to the profession. The membership is going to help the person only to get some extra job or to consult him for different needs. The association is not developing the field of PR in SA. There is nothing to mention about courses or workshops.

The distinction between academics who are not aware of real PR activities, and training courses that are organised by individuals with PR experience, is pointed out again. PR practitioners blame the official Saudi PR Association, because they are not aware of the problems that PR practitioners have, and they are not willing to listen to practitioners and to address PR issues. Moreover, it seems that PR practitioners do not have the authority to suggest courses' ideas or the subjects of discussion at the PR Association because the academics who are responsible for the PR association will control these ideas and teach courses that they consider suitable. Interviewees

seem to think that PR academics believe they know best about what PR practitioners need, even though they do not have actual experience in the real life PR field, and they have only had contact with PR theories. By forming an unofficial PR association, PR practitioners bring real problems to the table. For example, they discuss real life case studies, media and PR experiences and this helps them find solutions to their problems. Furthermore, it is interesting that this informal PR association is not officially recognised by the government and is not under government regulation, as all official associations must be. However, its members still decided to adopt and abide by a code of ethics. Members take their association's meetings seriously, as they consider membership open not only to qualified PR practitioners, but also to experienced PR practitioners. Participant 13 said:

I am not a member of any PR association in Saudi Arabia, because PR associations do not play any role in helping the PR career in Saudi Arabia. But I am a member of a volunteer PR team and we started this team with 9 PR practitioners and we have our PR account on Twitter. In this PR team we tend to bring a case study and we analyse it. The reason why we are not an association or a committee is because we would need to be under a government umbrella, and we believe we need to be independent from any kind of umbrellas.

Interviewees seem to believe that the autonomy of their association is necessary because they can control what they learn, they can choose what is useful in their everyday practice, and they can also control who is allowed to enter the association. In addition to the benefits of an autonomous association, PR practitioners have discussed also the subject of PR training (see Appendix 12 for quotations that reflect the Public Relations training theme). The thesis looks at PR training because it shows from whence practitioners in SA gain their knowledge about PR. The term 'PR training' in this thesis refers to any type of PR training courses that are organised by the universities, by PR associations or by private companies, in order to improve their employees' skills.

PR practitioners saw PR training as a useful method to increase the knowledge of PR practitioners. However, PR practitioners are careful about selecting training that will offer them real life solutions to their problems. Some interviewees are aware of the

fact that some training offers only theoretical outdated information that is not useful for the modern day PR. Several interviewees prefer training that addresses issues related to social media, infographics (Participant 6, see Appendix 7). Participant 12 said “Training helped me and developed my skills and my career. For example, I took a modern course that helps my PR work, a course in infographics.”

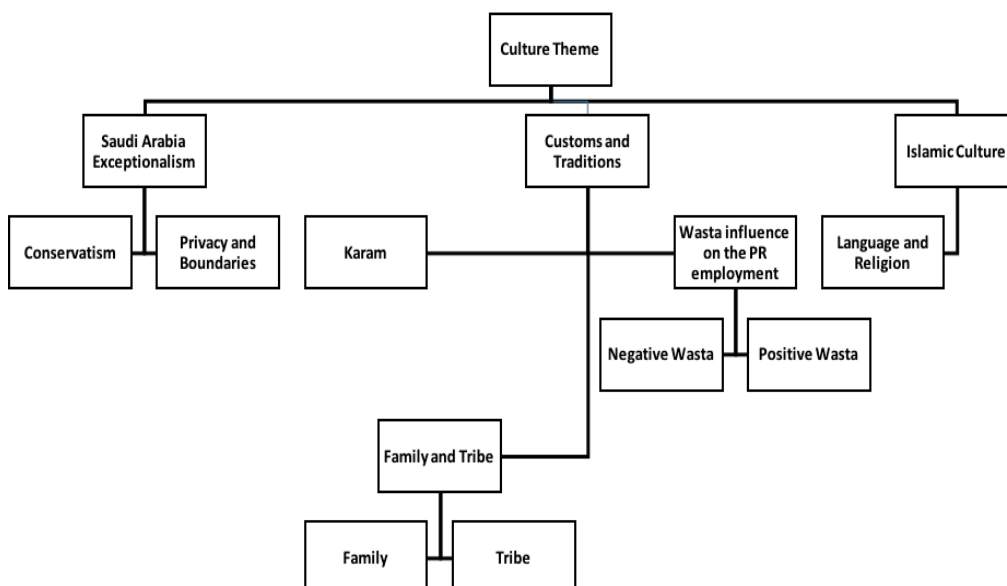
Participant 6 revealed that, in order to find useful PR training, practitioners need to travel outside the country to special training that is organised by different private organisations. As has been previously discussed, local PR associations do not offer sufficient support to PR practitioners and, due to this, besides the fact that PR practitioners form unofficial associations, practitioners need to actively seek out courses to help them and will even travel outside the country to solve their issues. Moreover, some participants indicated that there is a large number of individuals who travel abroad to study at universities and participate in training courses in Western countries. Participant 18 talked about “the introduction of an international educational program which meant Saudi students went abroad to Western countries to study for several years”.

It is, however, questionable whether they can get useful help from PR trainers from different countries, considering that they need to apply it in a different country with a different context and culture. In order to understand why culture and context must be taken into consideration when discussing PR, the next section will examine the cultural context of SA and its main cultural features.

6.3 Culture theme

The thesis looks at SA culture in order to find out how it can influence PR practice. SA culture was discussed in detail by interviewees, and several characteristics that are considered unique have been listed. The culture theme includes the categories: Saudi exceptionalism, customs and traditions, and Islamic culture (see Figure 10 for more detail)

Figure 10: Structure of the theme culture



As participants suggested, religion is embedded in Saudi culture, influencing all areas of life- social life, work and economy. The fact that Mecca, the centre of the Islamic world, is in SA, gives participants a sense of importance, a feeling of pride, and a feeling of protecting the holy place. This has been identified as being similar to American exceptionalism. The exceptionalism category was identified in the interviews and it includes two subcategories: conservatism and privacy and boundaries. The findings suggest that places that have cultural significance also exert a particular influence over culture. The culture's response to that is to protect the place and its meaning, which means protecting Islamic teachings. This could be defined as Saudi exceptionalism. Several interviewees expressed their pride in the fact that the two holy mosques, Mecca and Medina, are part of SA, and it is believed that this is what affects their culture. Participant 26 agrees that "Saudi Arabia is a different country from the rest of the world, we have similar habits to the Arab Gulf

states, and Saudi Arabia has a unique thing, which is the two holy places: Mecca and Medina.” As the country is seen as unique in a positive way, this might explain why Saudis do not want to change and prefer to preserve their traditions. The religious factor and their wish to preserve traditions would explain why society is conservative. The term ‘conservative’ can have different interpretations, depending on the society, its cultural and political context. It is important, therefore, to explain what conservatism means in relation to the country of Saudi Arabia.

Conservatism refers to society’s strict boundaries, such as privacy, gender separation, commitment to religion and culture, respecting tribal wishes, which provides the individuals with social security and stability (see Appendix 13 for quotations that illustrate the Conservatism theme). Conservatism is seen as a feature that offers stability and boundaries. Boundaries are cultural and are determined by traditions and customs, for instance, respecting privacy, gender separation, keeping the tribe and the family’s reputation undamaged. It is important to be aware of how conservatism is understood in this area, in what way it is demonstrated, and what are the dimensions of that concept in the data. In order to find out how PR practitioner’s work is influenced by the SA culture, the interviewees were asked questions in relations to it. The findings suggest that conservatism is seen as a way of providing social cohesion because it provides security and also stability. For example, Participant 6 pointed out:

Saudi Arabian society is a conservative society and we can feel secure about our family and ourselves. I remember my Emirati friend told me that I am lucky to be in such a society like Saudi Arabia and he said now in the Emirates he is scared about his kids when they will be teenagers, they will not be in a conservative society so they will be in a dangerous society.

Although participants point out that Saudi society is conservative, they also indicated that it is now open to change. The concept of change was repeated throughout the interviews. Participants agreed that society used to be resistant to change, but in time it adapted to it. For example, Participant 16 recalled “when the importance of tourism was introduced society did not accept it, believing it would destroy behaviour; however, nowadays even the most conservative cities are open to

organising carnivals or events.” Even though most participants seemed to view traditions as being beneficial and as a source of pride, a few respondents believed that they cause restrictions on society and that traditions stop society from developing and moving forward (Participant 11). This points to a tension between modernity change and tradition. In other words, some respondents view Saudi society from the outside of society’s norms and rules and believe these rules are obstacles to social progress. This tension happens in other practices, such as PR.

Although change has been embraced and accepted, Saudi society has, overall, remained highly conservative. However, it is important to point out that interviewees view Saudi society not as one single culture, but as a nation formed of different tribes with different cultures. This is important to discuss because tribal connections affect the PR field through *wasta*, thus affecting employment and the access of unqualified individuals to the PR sector. Participant 26 stated that “society in SA is ruled by the *Sharia* law and by traditions and customs. The society is 85 percent Arabic pure tribes, and each tribe has their customs and traditions”.

Participants explained the influence and importance of tribes in Saudi political and social life by comparing them to political parties in the Western world. For example, individuals are very influenced by the decisions and opinions of their own tribes. Every tribe has a leader who is consulted when political decisions are taken in government. Saudi society is influenced by customs and traditions in a particular way. For example, there are things in Saudi society that are forbidden, not because of religion but because of customs, such as the women not being allowed to drive. This is therefore a society that tries to preserve ancient traditions and adapt them to modern times, for example, adapting technology to religious beliefs and traditions.

Although participants agree that there are factors that change Saudi society, privacy and boundaries are still factors that are respected. The terms privacy and boundaries in this thesis refer to particular cultural behaviours in SA, such as wearing modest clothes in public, for both males and females, and gender separation at work or in public spaces (see Appendix 14 for quotes that show examples of the privacy and

boundaries theme). In SA boundaries divide public life from private life. For example, gender separation is a fundamental non-negotiable structure that places restrictions on both genders. This fact is accepted by Saudi society, and participants believe that it does not affect women because women covering their face does not stop them from working in open environments where they interact with the public, such as customer service, working in hospitals, etc.

Regarding the subject of women, the interviews suggest that the population holds on to traditions while adapting to changing circumstances. For example, participants expressed their opinion particularly regarding the subjects of the small number of women working in PR and of women covering their faces, and how this affects women who work in PR. It was revealed that the number of women working in PR is increasing, because PR is now taught in a larger number of universities. The interviews also indicated that there is a high demand for PR specialists in the field in SA, and for this reason women are attracted to this field. There is also an increasing number of female universities and companies with female departments that are searching for female PR practitioners. Participants suggest that an increasing number of women are hired in private PR companies because they have a PR educational background and are considered more knowledgeable. As Participant 4 revealed:

They have started to have a good position in the PR field and they have started to be the majority now, especially in private companies. When I contacted some PR agencies I have started to notice the number of women practitioners is increasing. I dealt lately with a PR agency and all the staff were ladies and they were doing everything, PR campaign, social media, organisation management. I dealt with the ladies' PR agency. They are good but they lack experience because women have just started entering the field.

As pointed out by the participant, the number of women in the PR sector is increasing, however, societal norms still affect how practitioners deal with the opposite gender. For instance, PR practitioners take into account gender separation when dealing with the public. When organising conferences, the rooms have to be divided by gender. If practitioners do not respect cultural features, such as putting men and women in separate rooms, they will be criticised by the public and the image of the company will be affected. Participant 5 says:

I remember in one of the international conference we organised, the hotel did not put a partition between the men and women audiences and we had complaints from the Saudi females because they could not be comfortable with drinking and eating, so we had to deal with this matter.

The interviewee suggests that PR practice is affected by societal norms and if rules, for instance, if gender segregation is not respected, society will penalise practitioners. In this case, individuals have reinforced traditions and beliefs at this event. In conclusion, **customs and traditions** have a strong influence on the individual's life. Saudis still see the preserving of traditions and customs as vital and this still has a strong impact, not only in the personal lives of Saudis, but also in PR practice (see Appendix 15 for quotations that reflect the customs and traditions theme). In this thesis, the concepts of "customs" and "traditions" refer to traditions such as *karam*, which means being generous to guests. Other traditions and customs that were mentioned are honouring the elderly, wearing modest clothes in public, obeying the family's or tribe's wishes, and religious celebrations.

Traditions and customs are parts of SA culture and they determine conservatism, however, it was revealed that many traditions are taken from Islam. Islam seems to have an influence not only on customs, but it also affects the individuals' identity. Participant 1 said:

Islamic religion gave us a different identity from others, and how the Saudi society practises Islam gave us a different personality and identity. We have the customs and traditions which control Saudi society and give it a different identity from others. For example, one of the values is the love of helping others, and other values are the *karam* values.

The participant suggested the characteristics that determine exceptionalism, such as the fact that Saudis believe they have a different identity and personality from those of other societies because of their religion. Participant 1 mentioned this (see above). Traditions must be followed so as not to affect the family's reputation, and because family is so important in the life of the individual, the family's needs and wishes will

be respected (Participant 3). This would explain why *wasta* has such a great influence on the work of PR and the hiring of unqualified PR practitioners.

Saudis seem to identify themselves with traditions, and they feel that this is what keeps them apart from other nations. Their identity equals traditions and therefore they feel that it is important to preserve those traditions (as Participant 1 stated). Conservatism and traditions can also be connected to persuasive techniques or persuasive appeal. Key values taken from SA traditions, and also from religion, are used in PR work. As Participant 9 stated “Saudi society is conservative culturally, religious and emotionally. You can use the culture and the religion to influence people through the PR messages.” Customs and traditions determine conservatism, and the connection between them is used by PR practitioners to influence publics. Nevertheless, religion also has a strong influence over traditions and family life. The religion’s influence on the society gives birth to an Islamic culture. The thesis has chosen to look at Islamic culture as this is a cultural feature that affects all areas of life in SA, including the personal and work life. The strongest theme under Islamic culture was that it is a sensitive subject to discuss or to deal with in PR work. A relevant example was given by Participant 18:

We dealt with a subject related to the Islamic culture, for example, when we discover a sculpture that people used to pray to, we do not publish it in the media and we do not call it an idol, but we say it is an antique. We need to know how to edit this sensitive subject.

Islamic culture influences work in such a way that sexual references are avoided, and if they are utilised in communication work they will be strongly penalised by society as this is seen immoral. An example of an immoral act was given by Participant 1, who described “an advert on TV where, when a man drank coffee, he got slimmer and his trousers fell down, and this advert was taken down due to complaints coming from the public.”

Another aspect of Islamic culture that influences communication work is gender. Gender separation affects physical aspects of work, such as organising conferences or meetings. Culture affects communication when it is related to gender aspects. For

example, photos with women are rarely published, and when they are they only display pictures with women wearing hijabs. Participant 22 stated that “we need to publish the news without photos in Saudi Arabia because, in Islam, women need to cover their hair and wear modest clothes, so we will publish only pictures of women who at least wear Hijabs”.

Islamic culture is reflected also in the way PR practitioners communicate. Religion is a factor that is used in persuasive language and it alters information that is transmitted. Interviewees are aware that using an Islamic reference will persuade its publics and make communication more efficient. The fact that practitioners use Islamic references is explained by the fact that these Saudi individuals have grown up and developed their minds in the Saudi cultural and religious context. Their development cannot be understood without connection to the cultural context in which they grew up. Moreover, their view of the world is affected by the agents of culture in Saudi Arabia, such as their social groups. When individuals express themselves they therefore pass cultural knowledge, which is done through symbols, signs and concepts. In this context, PR practitioners use religious concepts in their communication. Interviewees agreed that discussing anything that is against the Islamic religion is considered sensitive (Participants 1,5,9,11,14,16,19,21,22,23,26). Participant 12 said:

Islamic values affect the way we practise PR and communicate in a positive way. For example, Islam encourages us to be trustworthy and honest, so during my work this value is influencing me when I deal with any subject that is related to my work. Also this depends on the person. Some Muslim people would not be honest but this is the value of Islam. The good Muslim person will practise it.

Honesty is not a new value that Islam has introduced into SA, it is a value that is important in all countries, including those in the Western world. The difference is that in SA honesty has been enhanced by Islam, so when an individual takes a decision that is related to something ethical or moral, they always think about it from a religious point of view. As PR in SA is not legally an official profession, like the doctors’ and lawyers’ professions, there are no laws to punish unethical behaviour.

For this reason, practitioners use their moral ethical code, which is highly influenced by Islam. Islamic themes are used in language, for example, quotations from the *Qu'ran* and the Prophet Muhammad's statements are used in CSR to persuade people. PR work uses a blend of religion and culture within the messages that are sent. These themes are used to persuade society because they are efficient. Participant 26 said:

We do use the Islamic themes in our PR activities. For example, we had a campaign called 'Smile' and we tried to influence the target audience by using some of the Prophet Mohammed's statements (smiling to your brother is a good deed).

Religion is thus used in language with the purpose of persuading. It is thus not surprising that Arabic language knowledge has been listed as one of the important skills that PR practitioners should have. The thesis has looked at how language knowledge is used in every day PR and whether it is considered important. The strongest theme was that language knowledge is important in the work of PR. It is important to add that several participants agreed on the point that religious themes are used in communication work, especially in language used in communicating with the public and with business partners. The religion factor is added to language skills in order to create a persuasive language. Participant 13 said that when they talk to a client they add Islamic value to the language, such as mentioning the name of God or saying (we take care of you by the blessing of God). In SA practitioners transmit cultural knowledge through using cultural signs, which, in this case, is done through using religious quotations. Participant 13 stated:

For us, we use the Islamic theme to make the relationship with our target audience very strong, because our target audience is linked to the Islamic religion. For example, in the Saudi aircraft, there is a small mosque inside for people to pray and before the airplane takes off, there is a religious statement from the Prophet Mohammed that he used to say before he travelled. For example, in the way we write for our client we try to mention the name of God, saying, for instance, (we take care of you by the blessing of God), so we are adding the Islamic value to the language.

Religious language is used commonly in SA in professional contexts, however, the question is what happens when practitioners have to communicate to a public outside Saudi Arabia's cultural context. One of the participants revealed that even though press releases are written in English, they are checked by an agency and filtered to transmit a correct message.

In addition to the fact that religion is part of a Saudi individual's life, family and tribe have a great influence over the individual's life decisions (see Appendix 16 for quotations that show the 'family and tribe' category). The research shows that family and tribe are connected to each other, as some participants see the tribe as being a synonym for family, and individuals treat their tribe members as their own family. Both categories are analysed here individually and the thesis also examines the relationships between them. The interviewees have used the concept of family to mean extended family, such as parents, children, grandchildren, uncles, aunts and cousins. The interviews suggest that, in SA, the individual has a very close relationship with the family, and this relationship is enforced by Islam. Family reputation is also highly important, and because the individual represents the family in society, they have to care for their own individual reputation because this will affect the image of their family in that society. Additionally, several participants believe that the closeness to the family is unique to this country (Participants 5,10,11,15,17,19,21). Participant 27 stated that "Saudi Arabia has certain unique characteristics, such as being a religious society, so the relation between the individual and the family is strong because the religion asks us, as Muslims, to have this strong relationship with the family".

As the participant points out, family relationships are made tighter by encouragement from religion and also due to traditions. There are strong connections among all these three factors: tradition, family and religion. Participant 25 says "Saudi individuals are loyal to their families, so this quality affects the individual's decisions. The person will put the family and the tribe as a priority." While the influence of family is viewed as being positive, the interviews indicate that family negatively affects the PR field, because individuals find family more important than work. For example,

individuals will choose family time over working for the company, they will not work overtime, they will not choose to move to a different city for a better job, because they would be far from the extended family (parents, brothers, sisters, cousins). Participant number 4 stated that:

No, I wouldn't move. I can't move to a place without my family. Especially for a PR person who is used to communicating and being with the family all the time, it would be hard to go even for a better position and a better salary. Having my family around me gave me stability and I was comfortable from a psychological point of view.

This means PR companies are not able to acquire the best PR practitioners that they wish to hire, because they are not flexible and willing to put the company before the family's wishes. Participant 6, for example, revealed how he gave up PR training to spend time with the family:

I used to be a member of the Saudi PR Association, the MEPR Association and the PRSA from the US. I used to attend some courses and training courses, but nowadays I do not have enough time to be a member of any of them. I spend my time with my family and at my work.

As the interviews show, family and tribe influence employment. Additionally, family and tribe use *wasta* (connections) to find employment for their members. Individuals that are not able to find a job and do not have a PR qualification can thus easily be hired in a PR position. According to the interviewees, the PR sector is easily accessible to unqualified individuals, as long as their family has *wasta*. This affects the PR field as individuals that have no knowledge of PR are hired.

In addition to looking at the importance of family in the individual's life it is also important to look at the tribe's role and how it affects PR life. Tribes have been seen as an important element of Saudi Arabian society. The tribe is seen as a family and it has very old historical roots. Tribes are reportedly very large in number and *wasta* is used not only with family relations, but also with tribal relations. This means unqualified individuals will be hired in PR departments if they come from the same tribe, but not necessarily from the same family. The practice looks like a currency of

obligation that is incurred and discharged alongside other practices. Participant 8 stated “The connection to the tribe is stronger than the connection to the nation.” Moreover, loyalty affects individuals’ decisions. The concept of the tribe still affects individuals’ lives and PR practitioners’ lives, and to avoid conflicts and criticism of tribes or of negative historical events are not covered in the media. Participant 26 stated:

In *Terhal* magazine, if there are some historical facts that might be sensitive, related to the tribe, when in a certain area there is a tribe that has had conflicts with other tribes, we prefer to delete this from the context so we won’t have any issues or complaints, because we know this is a sensitive thing in Saudi society.

Cultural features, such as family and tribe, affect individual life and also determine features such as *karam* and *wasta* (see Appendix 17 for quotations that reflect the *karam* category). Participant 24 believes that the Saudi population loves to be generous and this is something they inherit from their ancestors. They consider it as part of tradition. *Karam*, which is translated as generosity, is practised within the business field because, traditionally, local people used to welcome family, friends and business individuals with the same idea of being generous and welcoming. Participant 24 says “We are a generous population and we love to be generous to others, and the *karam*, or generosity, is something we learn from our ancestors, and we did not forget our ancestors' culture and tradition.”

Karam is a term in SA culture is related to giving gifts to guests without expecting them to give back, offering dinners to visitors, pleasing guests, such as perfuming the house to show the guests that the hosts are happy to have them. In the business world, it is used with the same idea, but the purpose is to maintain business relationships or to create business relationships, rather than social relationships. This thesis has examined *karam*, as it is said to affect the business field in particular, and the PR field implicitly. An examination of the interviews has suggested that there is a relationship between PR and *karam*. Several participants have seen it as a positive mediator in relationships, as part of a successful PR practice, and using it means showing respect and appreciation. Participant 2 stated:

I think *karam* is an additional and exclusive value for the Saudi PR practitioner. For example, when an international visitor comes for a business meeting and the organisation treats the visitor with generosity, he will have a good image of the organisation.

The practitioner seems to attribute certain values to the Saudi practitioners. Apart from exceptionalism, which is suggested by the codes 'Islam' and 'unique', the interviewer believes also that *karam* is a positive, valuable quality in practice, and practising this value can only bring positive outcomes, such as promoting a good image of the company. *Karam* is viewed generally as a positive practice, for example, interviewees do not see giving expensive gifts to guests as bribery, but as a tool with which to maintain relationships. It is mainly seen as market exchange, which means PR practitioners give a material product, such as an iPad, and they get a service instead, such as publishing PR material or avoiding the writing of negative information about that certain company. As Participant 3 stated, "Gift giving will also ensure the reliability of journalists". The interviews revealed that, in terms of markets and goods, the market value of journalistic reliability depends on the paper and on the company. However, other participants disagreed with the fact that gift giving ensures the reliability of journalists. According to one participant, not all organisations give gifts to journalists. For example, journalists are required by law to publish official news that comes from governmental institutions. However, when news comes from private institutions that do not give gifts to journalists, practitioners attract them by framing the news in such a way that it would attract readers, or by giving them exclusivity (Participant 4). Participant 4 stated:

I won the reliability of journalists through giving them an exclusive and more detailed story. For the general newspapers that are not specialist, I give them a summarised story. I usually put a highlighted story on our website for our internal public. We don't give them expensive gifts. We give them exclusive stories. This is how we attract journalists.

Additionally, the interviews reveal that there is a tight connection between *karam* and PR because practitioners are involved in CSR and, traditionally, *karam* is used in SA in social relationships and business relationships. CSR thus translates through

practicing *karam*. Moreover, a practitioner who practises *karam* is seen as being highly valuable and will have a close relationship with the management. Participant 14 stated that:

Karam is the soul of the work of PR in Saudi Arabia. For example, when you organise an event and you receive foreign guests, I think the *karam* value will be great to show to foreign guests. *Karam* will thus be clear when you give expensive gifts and a big dinner party. I think *karam* is one of the most important PR tools in Saudi, because this value makes the reputation of an organisation very good, and this is the core of the PR work.

Karam is therefore used to maintain or create business relationships on the basis of Saudi tradition, and this is because there is an expectation of generosity on both parts. Moreover, PR practitioners believe they are expected to fill this role of gift givers in the company, and they feel it is their duty to maintain good relationships. Participant 4 revealed: "I think to give gifts is a good thing and a normal thing, and it is part of the protocol. If I have good relations with the journalists for two years, why shouldn't I give them a symbolic gift". However, the interviews suggest that only private companies maintain this practice, since they have a budget for giving gifts to win the reliability of journalists. Governmental institutions, on the other hand, do not offer, as journalists are required to publish official news. The interviews suggest that PR practitioners are not aware of other methods of maintaining relationships, and this may be because they are not educated in PR knowledge.

Another cultural feature that is used by PR practitioners in their relationship with journalists is *wasta*, which is translated as connections (see Appendix 18, which shows quotations that reflect the *Wasta* category). The subcategory, *wasta*, is included in the category 'customs and traditions', in the culture theme. Two codes were predominant in this subcategory: negative *wasta* and positive *wasta*. Positive *wasta* refers to when PR practitioners have useful connections to journalists, and also when *wasta* is viewed as a positive commitment to the tribe. Negative *wasta* refers to the process through which unqualified individuals are hired in PR positions. Negative *wasta* can be explained by the fact that, through social relationships, unqualified individuals are hired in company positions that negatively affect the

work field. This thesis has revealed that one of the factors that determines negative *wasta* is that the management decides the status of PR in the company or organisation, and the management use *wasta* to hire new employees.

Moreover, interviews suggest that employees who are not efficient in their jobs are not fired and are sent instead to work in PR departments. Moreover, interviewees claim that unqualified individuals who are hired through *wasta*, and who are seen as unsuitable for the company are also sent to work in the PR departments, and therefore, unqualified individuals find jobs thanks to their tribe's influence. However, the tribe does not have an influence on persuading in relation to the hiring of unqualified individuals in fields such as medicine and engineering. The PR occupation is viewed, therefore, as being not as important as other professions such as those mentioned. Participant 11 revealed:

Now I am part of a project to renew a PR department in one of the government institutions and to evaluate their work and to restructure the PR department. In this department we found that one of the editors has never written news in his life, but he was considered an editor. We found out that he got this position by *wasta*. When they want to write press releases they call a PR agency to work for them, so they are getting salaries and relying on other people to do their work.

Some interviewees believe that *wasta* harms the PR field by introducing unqualified PR practitioners. Maybe because PR is a new, unclear and unprotected field, anyone without qualification is hired and that may be the reason why *wasta* is so strong and open to exploitation. However, as mentioned earlier, the best PR practitioners do not necessarily have a PR background, but they do have the skills to work in the field, such as being fluent in foreign languages, having experience in journalism, and having charisma. However, participants are able to learn skills once they are hired because, as some interviewees admitted, there are courses that help in improving PR skills, and individuals also learn their skills at the job. If some of the participants entered PR through *wasta*, they were therefore able to receive training in order to be able to deal with PR practices. Moreover, some participants seem to be eager to learn more, to attend PR courses and training to improve their work, which shows that the PR sector may be able to improve, in spite of hiring unqualified individuals through

wasta. However, not all of the sides of *wasta* are seen as being negative, and in the next section the analysis will look at the positive side of *wasta*.

The positive side of *wasta* is seen in the relationship between PR officers and journalists. PR officers use *wasta* with journalists, and participants believe that to have *wasta* is more important than to be skilled in PR. *Wasta* is also seen as being helpful in solving work issues and connecting with people, such as when organising events (see Appendix 7 for Participants 2,4,6). Participant 14 stated:

The reputation of PR officers in Saudi is related to *wasta* in different ways. For example, when the PR officer has many good relations with other people, this relation can help the organisation to skip a long process. So this is considered *wasta*. Also *wasta* manifests itself when the higher management at the government institution employs unqualified people at the PR department to please some people.

Having *wasta* is seen as a better quality than having PR skills or PR education. Participant 7 said:

I think PR in Saudi Arabia, on all levels, relies on the personal relations and *wasta*. So if you have a lot of connections everywhere, this will make you an ideal PR officer, despite the lack of PR knowledge and PR education.

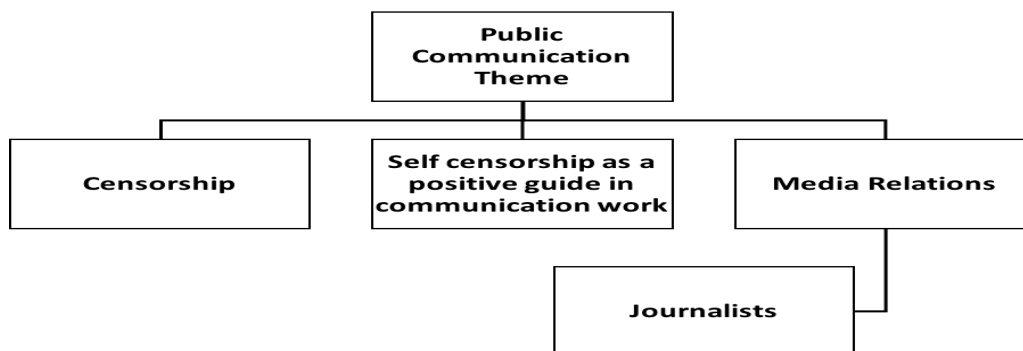
Wasta is seen also as being positive because it helps the community, when hiring a qualified person for the job. The tribe, or the family, knows they can rely on the individual to find a position for any member of the family who needs help. This type of view is also influenced by the religion, as the synonym of good *wasta* is *Shafaa*, which means to help someone. For example, Participant 11 stated that “*wasta* is not seen as a failure, but more as a commitment, because people develop, learn and they are motivated to work”. *Wasta* is therefore used as a currency. It is a social obligation to help others. The reason for this practice is that the members’ prosperity depends on the tribe, and the individual must secure it. Each tribe will do the same, and it is viewed as normal. In this section, the data analysis has examined the cultural features that influence PR practitioners and the PR field in SA, and the thesis

continues with the analysis of public communication factors and their influence on PR practice.

6.4 Public communication theme

The public communication theme was taken from the research aims, with the purpose of understanding how PR practice is managed within the Saudi traditions of public communication, such as freedom of speech, censorship, self-censorship, and the relationship with journalists. One key point in this thesis is to examine how PR officers deal with censorship and self-censorship in their work. In the interviews, the issues of censorship and self-censorship came up and a range of views was discovered. The categories in this theme are censorship, self-censorship as a positive guide in communication work, and media relations (see Figure 11 for more details).

Figure 11: Structure of the theme public communication



Censorship can seriously affect PR practice, as the PR practitioner's job is to communicate with the publics, and censorship can affect how the message is transmitted (see Appendix 19 for quotations that illustrate the Censorship category). The interviewees have suggested that journalists do not censor the press releases and information that a practitioner sends because they are already censored. The interviewees have admitted that they practise self-censorship and they do not communicate certain information that might offend people on a cultural and religious level, or information that might affect the reputation of the company. Moreover, the participants agreed that the censorship laws allow for the media to be critical.

However, criticism has to be done in a polite manner, so as not to offend individuals or institutions. Interviewees have suggested that, thanks to the internet, censorship was loosened, and there is more freedom of expression. Participant 14 said:

Censorship in Saudi Arabia is very weak. I view it from the perspective of PR officers and journalists and that is why I said it's a weak censorship. For example, there is an official rule that organises the relationship between the government institutions and the newspapers. The law states that when the government institutions send any news to the newspaper, they are not allowed to change the style of writing and to change any part of the news. If the newspaper frames the news in a way that will mislead the readers, I, as a government institution, will be able to sue the newspaper. But the reality is that, in Saudi Arabia, you cannot do anything, and the Ministry of Information and Media that created the rule of censorship do not practise it.

It is important to note that Participant 14, who acknowledged that censorship is not strict in SA, has had a long experience in the PR field, both in the private sector and in the government one, which shows that he has had experience in dealing with censorship. The interview participants have a shared experience of censorship in practice. They agreed that, in SA, politics, religion and sexuality are censored. For example, criticism against institutions and the government is censored, and criticism against religious leaders or against Islam is forbidden. In relation to the subject of sexuality, photography or information of a sexual nature are censored. These factors seem to have an effect on the practice. For example, Participant 14 mentioned that some PR practitioners feel too much pressure when publishing materials that might manipulate the public, and they resign as they feel their job contradicts their ethical beliefs. Other subjects that are usually censored refer to society affairs, such as tribes, customs and traditions (Participant 23). Sensitive financial information related to private companies is usually censored from press releases (Participant 7).

There were also alternative answers to censorship. For example, Participant 21 felt that censorship in SA has started to weaken or be reduced. The participants added that subjects about corruption in organisations would not have been published in the past, however, now, if there is proof of corruption, the material will be published. However, he agreed that if there is offensive material or heavy criticism about a political character or religious leader, the material will be censored. Participant 22

has blamed censorship on society, because Saudi society is conservative and reacts to offensive material, such as publishing photos of women. As an example, Participant 14 mentioned a case when a jewellery company advertised jewellery using a famous woman singer. The adverts were seen as provocative, because the advert showed the woman wearing a deep cleavage, and Saudi society complained and criticised it in such a manner that the company had to stop the advertisements. Other information that is sensitive is related to the government changing laws, such as those related to foreign labourers. For example, when publishing news about illegal foreign labourers the information has to be framed in a way that can be accepted by the public. Participant 14 also added that censorship is applied when institutions want to send materials to Western newspapers, since they do not want the Western newspapers to misinterpret the information, the materials are sent through the Saudi press agency. Participant 14 stated:

Lately, we use different ways of sending our news to the English newspapers instead of letting them take it from the Saudi Press Agency. We send it to the Saudi Press Agency to avoid any misunderstanding or interference from the Saudi Press Agency.

Additional public communication features that seemed to be connected were self-censorship and bribery. There is a financial interest in self-censorship, as journalists and practitioners cannot criticise companies that either have a financial interest in, or sponsor, their organisation. It has been noted that there is unethical behaviour by journalists and practitioners and that it is maintained by both sides, because journalists have financial interests and practitioners need to have their work published. Moreover, companies encourage this behaviour by offering practitioners a budget for gift giving, and they also encourage bribery and blackmail. Participant 24 stated that negative news about private companies will be censored if the media have a strong relationship to the companies due to advertising.

It has been revealed, however, that journalists also control PR work through financial bribes. Moreover, financial funds for PR departments are hard to get, so practitioners create a crisis in the press in order to force management to give them funds to repair issues. Several practitioners noted the use of bribery in the relationship between

journalists and practitioners (see Appendix 7 for Participants 12,14). Participant 4 said:

I think in Saudi Arabia I can notice there is bribery, which means giving expensive gifts to journalists, and so PR officers are lying to make a good image for their organisation. Also when the PR practitioner works for the manager, and not for the organisation, there is an ethical problem.

The question is whether PR practitioners can draw the line between *karam* and bribery. The interviews suggest that there is no clear delimitation between them. However, an indication would be the fact that *karam* is seen as a symbolic gift. For example, symbolic gifts are considered to be pens and notepads with the company's logo. Bribery is equal to unusual expensive gifts, such as a diamond pen that cost 200 pounds, or even cars. When asked to explain the difference between *karam* and bribery, participants believe an outstandingly expensive gift is seen as bribery, or when the one that gives the gifts expects a service in return, such as a good review in the media. However, a clear limit between *karam* and bribery cannot be established. Participant 4 said:

When we think about the limit of *karam*, we think of giving a symbolic gift that has the logo of the organization on the pen, or a flash memory or a power bank. In this case, this will not cross the limit of *karam*. This will be to all journalists. This is not a specific gift to journalists. But for the chief editor of a newspaper, the gift will be different. For example, in a telecoms company they will provide a mobile phone with an easy number to remember. Always, the gift should represent the identity of the organisation. I have a PR employee and he was responsible for taking photos of the conference, and during the conference a businessman was asking the PR employee to take more photos of him. He did, and after one week the business man called the PR employee and told him to come and visit his office. He gave him an envelope of 5,000 Riyal as a gift for taking the photos, and his photos were published. The PR employee saw the money and refused it. I didn't view this 5,000 Riyal as being bribery because if the business man gave him the money previously it would have been bribery. But because he gave it after 2 weeks of publishing the photos, it is like a gift. But I'm still not sure whether it is bribery or a gift?

It is important to note that several of the participants who confirmed the unethical behaviour of journalists have a PR educational background and also vast experience

in the PR field. An additional factor that affects PR practitioners' work is **self-censorship as a positive guide to work** (see Appendix 20 for quotations that illustrate examples of the self-censorship a positive guide to work category). Findings show that self-censorship is considered more useful than censorship, because it will protect the practitioner from being criticised by society. The findings suggest that Saudi individuals have learnt social behaviour from interpersonal relations, which means self-censorship is taught unconsciously through social interaction. PR practitioners are therefore aware of how society would react to a certain way of communication, and they know society's rules and expectations and have a knowledge of traditions and customs. PR practitioners know the meanings of gestures and language and how society will affect these.

Self-censorship is also used due to a lack of official rules or of laws that would stipulate what is allowed to be published or communicated to the publics, although some participants are aware of what needs to be published (Participants 20,10,6). As such, some participants use self-censorship as a self-guide to what to publish and how to avoid criticism. However, self-censorship is seen as being different from censorship. Self-censorship is seen as a personal code of ethics that has been taught since childhood and that contains societal values and beliefs, and it is seen as common sense. Participant 18 said:

I think it is important to have self-censorship to organise the work of journalists and PR officers. I think self-censorship helps people practise in a good way. For example, if I write a report about the exploration of a statue and in the report I mention this statue was an idol in the era before Islam, I will receive bad feedback from the public, because I touched something holy in their religion, which is mentioning the idol, and the idol goes against the core of Islam.

Tradition shapes communication work, and self-censorship is seen as being positive, because it is seen as a result of tradition and it protects tradition. Several participants have drawn attention to the fact that it is important for PR practitioners to be aware of traditions and customs (Participant 13,14,16,18,22,27). Self-censorship is seen as a protective umbrella over Saudi identity and tradition. Participant 24 stated:

Self-censorship is helping me publish the good news and also to control myself when I want to cross the limit in writing news, or creating ideas that are against my culture and society, and self-censorship will help me control myself when I want to publish or do something. Because I am a part of society, if I write something that is against society and against religion and culture, my society would not accept what I wrote, or my ideas, so the self-censorship will help me go the right way.

It is important to note that Participant 24 has long experience in media relations and PR and therefore is aware about what and how self-censorship is applied in the media and PR. Self-censorship is thus seen as self-discipline and restraint and it is like a moral guide that protects the individual's behaviour. It can be assumed that this moral guide has been taught through interaction with Saudi society, and thus the individual learns what influences society and which information will create a negative or positive reaction from the public. There are several subjects that practitioners avoid publishing or mentioning. For example, Participant 24 stated that they avoid writing about sectarianism. Participant 22 added that religion and Islamic scholars are subjects that practitioners avoid writing about or criticising. Additionally, practitioners avoid discussing sectarianism and avoid publishing photos of women. Participant 23 added that, in order to know what is allowed to be published, their institution created a department of religious guidance for consultation, because any immoral subject is considered sensitive. For example, Participant 23 said:

In the summer of 2014 the MBC TV channel made a TV series about incest, and a month before they showed the series the society and the religious leaders were against showing it, so after all the pressure the channel announced they would not show this series anymore.

Tradition affects communication practice, and PR practitioners have to respect traditions, otherwise they will be penalised by society itself. For example, when organising courses, practitioners had to communicate to the public that the course obeys Saudi traditions and culture, implying that the courses will have separate rooms for women and men (as Participant 22 stated). Not only does society affect PR work, but also their relationship with the media. Media relations are an important factor in the life and practice of practitioners. The media relations category was

extracted from the text, and this category refers to the relationship between PR practitioners and journalists, how they collaborate, how they communicate, and how their relationships are maintained. It is important to look at this aspect as the work of practitioners depends on media relations.

The strongest code in this category is that some participants agreed that they have good relations with journalists. The category ‘journalists’ refers to journalists’ behaviour towards PR practitioners, and the ways in which practitioners view their relationship with the press and how it is that they maintain their relationships (see Appendix 21 for quotations that illustrate the ‘journalists’ category). The relationship between journalists and PR practitioners is viewed as being positive, although practitioners do recognise the fact that the relationship needs maintaining through gift giving, otherwise journalists are not willing to publish materials (Participant 4). Participant 24 stated:

I make relations stronger through giving them gifts. Those journalists who like to receive gifts, if I stop giving them gifts, they will stop publishing my news, so I need to give them gifts. The gift giving... this is something major in our work. For example, if I don’t give a journalist a gift, he would not be reliable for us and our relationship would not be strong. Gift giving is one of the most important techniques for making a strong relation with the journalists. The CEO gives the PR manager a specific budget only for gift giving and to form a good relationship with the journalists.

The media are the main PR partner, and they seem to need each other, and “relationships are often maintained through trips and gifts and giving them exclusivity for the news through unethical practice” (Participant 14). Moreover, some companies hire journalists symbolically in their company, with the purpose of helping them publish only positive news in the newspapers and avoiding negative news. Journalists therefore work undercover as PR practitioners (Participant 9).

Media relations also depend on how much money the company is willing to invest in advertising. If the newspaper has a financial contract with the company, that provides money through advertising, “the media outlet will not publish negative news about this company and this is how private companies ensure good publicity” (as

Participant 8 pointed out). Although some practitioners see gift giving as something that is not unusual, other interviewees recognised it as bribery. Several participants admitted that good relations are conditioned by gift giving and trips.

The thesis has looked into the relationship of PR practitioners with journalists because practitioners depend on this relationship. While journalists have shown unethical behaviour, PR practitioners were also blamed for encouraging this behaviour by offering gifts to journalists (Participants 8, 9, 14, 24) such as iPads and trips to Dubai, or trips to the company (Participant 17, 21). However, at the same time, it was seen as a normal unethical practice which must be carried out, something that is part of their job's duties. Interviewees believe that if this unethical practice did not exist, the PR job would probably not exist (Participant 8).

6.5 Conclusion

In applying a qualitative approach to this study, the interviews conducted have produced data that has addressed the key research questions about what knowledge it is that PR practitioners acquire, what it consists of, how PR practitioners are influenced by the local cultural features, and by the public communication features. The chapter has extracted data using the open, axial and thematic coding methods and has found diverse categories within the themes, such as knowledge gained from various academic disciplines, journalism, tacit PR knowledge, hands-on knowledge and institutionalizing the PR profession which are part of the knowledge theme.

The contribution of the chapter is that it provides empirical data about the PR knowledge that is taught in universities, how PR associations handle training, and how they influence the PR field, and how PR practitioners gain their knowledge from their own everyday experience. The chapter has shown that practitioners come from diverse educational background, which influence the knowledge they have. The empirical data has shown that PR practitioners lack support from the associations and schools do not provide them with useful knowledge. The empirical data suggest that if associations were supportive, encouraging and offered knowledge and social support, individuals would develop their careers, their PR knowledge, and they

would be more interested in the PR field. However, a lack of support has an effect on the low interest of PR practitioners in developing their knowledge and therefore it has an effect on the PR field. Moreover, PR practitioners have shown a preference for practical knowledge rather than theoretical knowledge.

The analysis has also found information on the cultural features that affect PR practitioners, such as the roles of the family and the tribe in employment and in PR practitioners' decisions in relation to their work and career. Families and tribes can affect PR practitioners' lives both in a positive way and negative way through *wasta* which can be viewed as useful in relation to journalists. Moreover, the chapter highlighted the fact that Saudi society is affected by changes due to development, however cultural features, such as privacy and boundaries and customs and traditions have been preserved. Additionally, religion affects individuals' lives and identity, including communication, as it is used in PR campaigns and communication to the public and affects practitioners' ethical behaviour in a positive way. The study reveals that society has played an important role in forming the individual's way of thinking and interpreting events, thus demonstrating that culture has a very strong influence on practitioners, irrespective of their educational background or experience.

The findings have revealed that public communication affects PR practitioners through censorship, self-censorship, and through a complex relationship with journalists which involves unethical practices. The chapter has found that self-censorship however is viewed as positive because it is viewed as a self-guide that helps practitioners avoid censorship or criticism. The next chapter explains how the research questions were answered in relation to the findings and the literature review.

Chapter 7: An interpretation of the empirical findings on knowledge, culture, public communication and public relations in Saudi Arabia

7.1 The Saudi public relations profession and theories of the profession

This chapter seeks to examine the PR occupation in SA. The chapter starts with an examination of the theories related to the profession and the jurisdiction that PR practitioners have in SA in relation to the processes of the institutionalisation of the profession, then it continues with a discussion on the role of the state, associations and ethics in institutionalising that profession. The chapter carries on with an examination of the relationship between culture and profession and, finally, it focuses on the subject of organisational performance, using a socio-cultural approach.

This paragraph offers a quick overview of the sociological approach to the profession with the purpose of applying these theories to SA in order to assess the state of the profession against these criteria. Yang and Taylor (2013) consider PR in the Western world to be a profession, because the steps of professionalisation: education, professional association, abiding to a code of ethics, being responsible for the ethical information that circulates in society, have been achieved, as well as the provision of financial resources for PR. Jackson (1970) believed that the features of professions are that they have a strong knowledge base, that those in the profession need to acquire the relevant knowledge in a certain period of time, to serve society selflessly, and to be controlled by the state. Professional individuals, viewed through Western standards, can be described as being individuals who are specialised in their field, are entrepreneurs, business men/women, and whose occupation is based on complex knowledge and who have credibility, which is provided by the fact that they are organised into an association (Larson 1977; Brante 1990; MacDonald 1995). Another approach to the definition of a profession argues that a profession should

have advanced qualifications and skills that are based on theoretical knowledge, management and business skills, the ability to fulfil clients' demands, thus testing the competence of members (Greenwood 1957; Friedson 1983; Abbott 1988; Middlehurst and Kennie 1997; Kurtz 1998).

According to the criteria for professions that were discussed in the previous paragraph, the PR occupational group in SA does not fit within the definition of a profession. The duties of the PR occupation are not based on theoretical knowledge and, instead, the PR occupation has a particular set of limited tasks that are different in comparison to those tasks that are prevalent in Western practice. For example, PR practitioners undertake protocol and administrative duties. This thesis has examined how PR practice in Saudi Arabia can be understood as being a profession in two ways. Firstly, the thesis analyses the abstract knowledge that individuals learn at educational institutions, and then it looks at the knowledge that they use in their everyday work and the utility of these two types of knowledge.

Even though it is reported that there is a high demand for highly qualified PR practitioners, Saudi universities provide academic knowledge that is Western-centric and poorly translated (Abdelhay 2014). According to Al Habeeb (2007), in SA, students study PR alongside other subjects, such as mass communication and journalism (Al Habeeb 2007). Research by Gilinder (2012) also shows that students in Arab countries study theories of the science of communication, the Four Theories of the Press, Schramm's model of communication, Berlo's model of communication, framing theory and agenda setting theory. Theories such as the Four Theories of the Press have already been criticised for not being applicable since the book was published in 1956 (Nordenstreng 1997). Since 1956, there have been many changes in the economic sectors, in civil society and in markets (Ibid.). Moreover, the theories are concerned more with the relationships between the government and the press and they do not take into consideration the relationship with the audience (Ibid.). An analysis of Saudi universities' websites has also confirmed that they teach agenda setting theories (King Saud University 2016). The theories that are learnt in

universities therefore show that PR practitioners enter the PR sector with knowledge that is outdated and that is therefore not useful in practice.

The thesis' results have shown that practitioners have complained about the quality of the knowledge that is provided by universities. For example, one feature that is taught differently from what happens in real practice is: "ethical practice, which in theory should be easy to apply, but in reality practitioners have to be subjective and think of the company's interests" (Participant 8). The interviewees also pointed out that this affects graduates who want to enter the field, as PR managers are aware of what is taught in the universities and this is why they choose not to hire PR graduates. As Participant 14 stated:

The reasons why PR in Saudi Arabia is not developed is because the academic people in the university who teach PR are not practitioners. They have the knowledge without mixing it with practice, so they are not aware about the reality of PR in Saudi Arabia.

The issue is not only that PR practitioners study theories that have no connection to the real PR field, but also that they do not have experience. Although participants revealed that PR students have access to PR practice during their university years, this practice is reduced to administrative work. While there is no research to indicate their influence on PR practice, there are researchers, such as Al-Ahmed (1987), and Wiseman et al. (2008), who have indicated that Egyptians have had a strong presence in SA, due to their influence on the educational system. This may mean that they have had an influence on PR education and the understanding of the PR term. As has been discussed previously, in the political, cultural and public communication environment of Saudi Arabia chapter, Egyptian PR, and also PR in the Gulf countries, share similarities with the practice of PR in SA, such as that PR duties are understood as being administrative duties (Walters 2011; Algalab 2011; Ikram 2015).

Interviewees have argued that the fact that PR duties are understood as being protocol and administrative duties are due to Egyptian practitioners, who have introduced this style of practice and have translated the term PR from English to

Arabic with the meaning 'General Relations', thus determining the confusion around the term. It is thus not surprising that theoretical knowledge taught in universities has a negative image.

Algalab (2011) has noted that the models that are practised in the Arab countries are the 'hail and farewell' model, which is focused on protocol activities, such as receiving guests and managing accommodation; the 'government transaction model', which means solving visa requests, and the 'media coverage model', which is concerned with media relations. Additionally, Algalab (Ibid.) has stated that PR knowledge that is taught in universities is unsatisfactory, because there is no available information for PR practitioners who are willing to improve or update their knowledge. Moreover, there is a lack of PR journals and magazines, and PR research is not published online in Arabic (Ibid.). In SA, this thesis' results have shown that some participants believe theoretical PR knowledge is not necessary in the field of work, as PR practitioners only perform protocol duties. The relationship between knowledge and practice is complex, because practitioners state that since they perform administrative duties they do not need knowledge, however, it could be argued that because they do not have PR knowledge and are not aware of what PR duties consist, all they are able to do and all they know are administrative duties.

After examining the abstract knowledge that is taught in SA higher education institutions, which has been recognised as not being useful, it is vital to discuss the knowledge that practitioners use in their everyday work. Although researchers view academic knowledge as being useful, as it helps practitioners in their work, such as building relationships and undertaking advocacy, it has overall been viewed as being less important than PR experience (Yang and Taylor 2003). Moreover, companies, employers and PR practitioners in the Western world view experience as being vital, and internships that provide work experience are necessary during university training (Blackwell et al. 2001; Yang and Taylor 2003; Gregory 2014).

The thesis' results have shown that SA PR practitioners' knowledge mainly comes from their everyday experiences and from those of other practitioners. Tacit

knowledge and hands-on knowledge, are also viewed as being important by employers. For example, practitioners with experience are preferred to practitioners with a relevant educational background. Participants agree that while PR practitioners with PR knowledge are not completely rejected by PR practitioners in the field, it is considered that actual, real practice is more useful than the knowledge they have learnt at university. Moreover, real PR knowledge is considered to be knowledge that is gained from PR practice. Interviewees revealed that when they need to hire an individual, the main features they look for are PR experience and charisma, and the university background is not taken into consideration. A charismatic individual was defined by participants as being an individual who is well dressed, sociable and friendly. PR practice knowledge is extremely valued, so that when PR practitioners want to attend courses, they carefully choose only courses that will be taught by real PR practitioners who have experience, in order to learn from another's experience. They would rather not attend theoretical courses.

The results of the thesis have shown that the knowledge that PR practitioners value as useful actually belongs to a different occupational group, which is the group that practise journalism. In an examination of the role of professions in modern life, Abbott (1988) has pointed out that there are connections between professions and that the study of the professionalisation of an occupation should be carried out in relation to other occupations. Moreover, in relation to jurisdiction, Abbott (1988) has argued that most occupations base their work on abstract knowledge, however, occupations sometimes claim professional status that is based on abstract knowledge that is very weakly related to their practical work.

Participants believed that the second most useful knowledge comes from journalism experience, because when journalists enter the field they bring in a helpful network of other journalists, which makes PR practice easier, since it increases the chances that materials will be published, and journalists know how to write publishable press releases. It could be argued that PR practitioners do not know what material is worthy of publication, because they are not aware of what appeals to the public as they have only learned Western theories, or they send materials that are not suitable

for the local culture. Interviewees saw journalism knowledge as being helpful, and they believed that journalism and PR belong to the same field of communication, because, as the participants revealed, PR is taught in universities alongside journalism. Respondents believed that a journalist was more valuable in a PR department than an individual with a PR educational background, as an inexperienced PR practitioner would not know how to write a publishable press release and so would not be very successful.

As most theories on professions argue, the abstract knowledge is the assurance of the professions that they will hold onto particular tasks that are important (Parsons 1954; Macdonald 1995). However, in SA, abstract knowledge is seen as being useless and is largely set aside in both terms of practice and of any attempt at setting standards for the purposes of certification. The interviewees debated the subject of PR experience versus a PR educational background, and these topics were related to the lack of development in the PR field in SA. The findings revealed that PR diplomas are not necessarily needed when an individual wants to enter the PR field, and this is because PR education is viewed as being useless, and PR knowledge is not needed when carrying out protocol duties. By far the most important qualities for an individual who is willing to work in this industry are to have skills and experience, however, interviewees agreed that official examination would allow only the best individuals to enter the field. This means that, in terms of certification, practitioners understand the need for a standards-driven occupational closure, but, on the other hand, they struggle with the articulation of standards that are based on abstract knowledge, rather than on interpersonal skills.

However, participants seem to see PR experience as being equal to protocol, and PR knowledge as being equal to having social skills, and this raises the question about what an examination that tests practitioners would consist of. The thesis has discovered that PR practitioners have diverse educational backgrounds, such as psychology, administration and journalism. The research interviews revealed that PR practitioners did not see having different educational backgrounds as being disadvantageous, because PR practitioners tend to take the useful information learnt

from their university studies and adapt it to the work context. For example, if the practitioner has administrative knowledge, this will help with protocol duties in PR work, just as a degree in psychology is seen as being useful in maintaining media relationships. This means that PR practitioners possess knowledge from their diverse educational backgrounds and adapt it to their work practice. Journalism, in particular, is seen as being very useful, as individuals with this particular background know how to write.

It can be seen that practitioners use a variety of knowledge in their practice, however, PR practitioners do not use the abstract or academic knowledge that should help them in their practice, and which should be the educational base on which they build their careers. So the question would be why individuals use and adapt knowledge from their diverse educational background, such as administration, and do not use their PR knowledge. The answer is that PR practitioners are hired in departments regardless of their educational background, since some employers are aware that PR knowledge in universities is not useful and because PR departments are assigned with administrative and secretarial duties, they hire any individual with any educational background. Once hired, individuals therefore use in their practice anything that they have learnt in universities that may be helpful, such as administration or language skills. On the other hand, PR practitioners who have a PR educational background cannot adopt Western theories when practising protocol or writing press releases for a Saudi public, and to maintaining relationships with the press.

In terms of knowledge, in SA there is a separation between abstract knowledge and the hands-on body of knowledge. The abstract knowledge in SA is based on traditional communication and mass media theories. The abstract knowledge does not appear to play a role in claiming jurisdiction, because practitioners state that theoretical knowledge is not needed in the PR sector, and that the theoretical knowledge that is taught is useless and so, clearly, the theoretical knowledge is not the way in which they claim jurisdiction. This thesis has found that there is a body of knowledge that is disconnected from the practitioners and from practice, and it is

virtually useless to the profession. This is why practitioners value something else and that is why they value experience, what they learn from their own experience, and because tacit knowledge is more culturally sensitive knowledge that will circulate better, as the local cultural values are not recognised in knowledge that is borrowed from Western sources.

The results of the thesis therefore suggest that the knowledge that practitioners possess is limited and does not allow practitioners to perform real PR duties, such as campaigning and research. Researchers, such as Jackson (1970) and Yang and Taylor (2013) have stated that the development of the occupation occurs through professionalisation, which means higher quality knowledge, access to a sector of only highly educated individuals and the provision of ethics. In SA, abstract knowledge does not play a role in the process of institutionalisation. The only way the occupation of PR is shaped is by the organisations in which they work, and these institutions assign them the roles of administration and social protocol.

The limitation to the profession is that the only knowledge that PR practitioners use is hands-on knowledge. Educational institutions and associations do not contribute in any way to the institutionalisation of the profession. In this sense, the PR occupation in SA does not fulfil the requirements of a profession, and PR in SA is far from the process of professionalisation.

7.2 Institutionalising the profession

Apart from educational institutions that provide knowledge, professional associations also have a role in the development of the profession. According to Larson (1977), Friedson (1983), Abbott (1988) and Kurtz (1998) an occupation can be considered a profession if it shows credibility, and this credibility is created through the fact that professionals are part of an association that is recognised by the state. The association is relevant because it provides problem solving knowledge and a code of conduct and it also offers professional training. The results of the research have shown that SA practitioners are aware of the existence of a Saudi PR association, however, practitioners do not value it, due to its lack of activity and support.

Practitioners have suggested that the association was not created with the purpose of the professionalisation of the occupation, and associations have not assumed a role in shaping the PR occupation. With regard to professional training, such as courses, practitioners revealed that the association provides theoretical courses that are taught by university teachers. These courses are not regarded as being useful, because practitioners only seek courses that offer them practical advice or the opportunity to network. For this reason, some practitioners revealed that they attended private courses that are provided by private companies.

This shows that the association does not know what practitioners need, and although the association should provide support and development for PR practitioners, it actually follows the same approach in education as the universities by offering useless theoretical information. The association does not therefore offer problem solving knowledge or professional training, and it has no role in the institutionalisation of the profession. The existence of the association is only formal and exists mainly for prestige reasons. This subject will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Associations are considered vital in the progress of professionalisation through their organisation of courses, the accreditation of PR practitioners, the offering of financial aid for research, and the mentoring of individuals who have just entered PR (Yang and Taylor 2013). Kultgen (1998 cited in Fawkes 2015) has pointed out that professional associations' common official objective is to use their knowledge in order to serve society, to respect the dignity of individuals, and to put their financial gains in a secondary position. The development of professions, according to the Western literature, is mostly linked to the concepts of the market and of economic development (Macdonald 1995). Professions have mostly organised and reformed themselves into associations that have helped them to establish social credit (Larson 1977). In SA, however, the state is the main provider of finance and is also the main employer (Mazawi 2005). The state has a direct influence on employment in university positions, in creating jobs, in the development of institutions' policies and budgets (Mazawi 2005). Moreover, in SA, the associations do not have the ability to

influence the laws that would develop their profession. This means the state is the main factor that influences how PR practitioners are hired, their duties, and is also the factor that shapes the PR profession.

In SA, however, membership of official PR associations is a matter of prestige, which means individuals choose to join in order to increase their reputation, but that does not mean they are active in the association. This shows that PR associations' activities in SA are partly organised for the prestige of certain members, rather than to benefit all of its members. Interviewees have stated that when they subscribe to the association, they expect that the association will organise events and courses. However, this does not happen. As a response to the lack of activity, members give up their membership after a certain length of time.

The conclusion is that the behaviour of the SA PR association is not to serve society and PR practitioners, but only its official organisers. However, this may be because the association is still young and does not have the financial help to organise activities, such as sponsorship. Participant 26 stated that companies refuse to sponsor activities because they do not believe in PR. Participant 1 stated that:

I know we are not active because the association is still young, and I believe we have a plan to develop PR as a career, and we are working on it. I do not believe we have done anything for the PR practitioners in Saudi Arabia until now, but, from the academic point of view, we have published two academic PR magazines.

Practitioners who work for the association are volunteers, and they cannot afford to volunteer full time for the association (Participant 26). It must be noted that the state seems to have a very strong presence in both education and in regulating professional associations. The state thus directly plays an important role in the development of the profession. With regard to the Western view of the profession, in Western countries the state does not have such a vital role. The state is important in relation to licensing, however, it is not a significant player in the establishment of the profession.

Education is another element of institutionalisation. Although PR is a vocational field, PR education in SA does not seem to have a vocational context and it does not prepare students for the PR sector. Additionally, the training given in universities, in the form of internships, is problematic. The results of the research suggest that universities provide a training programme in which practitioners do not learn how to practise PR, but in which they are engaged in protocol duties. There is a disconnection between the fact that theoretical PR knowledge is provided by institutions and the fact that this knowledge does not seem to support the development of the profession and the ways in which PR officers practice and can claim tasks.

Another point in understanding the institutionalisation of the profession is the question of public trust and ethics. The concept of the 'profession' is a Western idea and it is often linked to ethics. According to Yang and Taylor (2013), a profession needs a code of ethics and also needs to assume responsibility for the ethical information that travels in society. Moreover, in the Western world, professionalism is often related to the presence of a code of ethics (Buhannad 1998). The reason the institutionalisation of a profession is related to ethics is that a lack of ethics means access by unqualified individuals to the profession, and this leads to unethical behaviour (Fitzpatrick and Gauthier 2001; White et al. 2009). Delorme and Fedler (2003), White et al. (2009), Bowen (2012), and Alterman (2015) have argued for professionalisation, because unethical practice has affected the negative reputation of PR and PR standards. However, although ethical guides have been provided by associations in the Western world, Grunig and Hunt (1984) have noted that they do not have the legal authority to penalise unethical practice. However, they can expel members for unprofessional conduct.

In SA, PR practitioners do not have to abide by a code of ethics, as neither the association nor the PR departments have adopted an official one, even though SA society is influenced by religion, and, in Islam, professionalism has been associated quite often with religious conscience, and Islamic teaching encourages individuals to be professional (Abdullah 2004; Abdulghafour 2009; Hasan 2013; Moosa 2014).

Afifi (2007) also considered that companies and institutions do not need a specific professional ethics, because Islam provides Muslims with an ethical code.

In SA, the subject of ethics has been strongly related to Islam, as moral codes are inspired by the Islamic religion. Researchers have stated that the religion ensures that individuals have a general ethical code (Abuznaid 2009). Moreover, communication jobs, such as journalism, have to function while, at the same time, respecting Islamic values and government rules (Abozayd 2007). The concept of a profession, in SA, has also been influenced by the religion of Islam (Abdullah 2004; Abdulghafour 2009; Hasan 2013). In Islam, individuals are required to be diligent and to perform a high quality practice. Moreover, ethical behaviour is equal to professionalism.

It can be argued that the concept of the profession comes from Western culture and it is associated to ethics, however, this notion comes from a Western point of view. The, Western profession therefore needs a certain type of ethics. In the Western world, the distance between the religious spheres of life and other spheres, such as economic, politics or professional work, have widened since the French revolution (Kalthoff 2015). In SA, however, religion seems to be much more fundamental to public life and, as shown above, it is directly involved in all aspects of social, political and economic activity. In SA, religious ethics has spread to all aspects of life and it is also a basis for ethical action in a professional context. In SA, therefore, there is no need for an ethical distinction and a separate ethical code for a profession, since this would be inappropriate because Saudi individuals are expected to work within the same ethical context. It must be considered that the Western view of the profession and ethics may vary from the Saudi view of ethics.

The interviewees have suggested that practitioners use an Islamic code of ethics because companies and institutions do not have official codes of ethics for their workers. Due to the lack of an official code of ethics, this thesis assumes that the ethical behaviour of practitioners depends on each individual's moral code. This raises the questions of how suitable it is to assume that individuals will follow the Islamic code of ethics in a company or institution, and whether there is a need for a

clear separate guide of ethics in a society which is supposed to share a particular religious sense of ethics. Professional ethics thus becomes personal ethics, which raises questions about the role of ethics in the formation of the professional groups, which are not distinct from those of the rest of the society in any way.

Another factor that blurs the boundaries between the Western idea of the profession and of expert performance is *karam*. This thesis examines how *karam* is used in business, its negative effects, and how *karam* is used in the relationships between journalists and PR. The concept of ethics in SA is complicated by cultural traditions: the boundary between the private and other spheres of life, such as economic activities, for example, earning a living, particularly in expert-based activities, is drawn sharply. In Islam, the cultural practice of *karam* makes it difficult to draw a boundary between knowledge and other bases for relationships, such as charity and supporting one's kin. This therefore affects the quality of work, as work is no longer based on expert knowledge, decisions are no longer concerned with efficiency and there is no meritocratic approach to work.

In Western societies, these boundaries between ethical behaviour and unethical activities are clearly drawn. This means that if individuals do not behave accordingly there is a clear breaking of the rules. However, in SA, there is a slightly more difficult line between cultural values and unethical practice. This is because *karam* is viewed as being generosity in the culture, but in PR practice it crosses into immoral practices. The cultural feature, *karam*, is translated as hospitality and generosity. This social behaviour appeared before the Islamic era as a coping mechanism in the hostile environment, because individuals had to rely on each other to overcome hard situations (Feghali 1997). In the Arab culture, hospitality means that strangers are treated well (Barnes 2003). Hospitality is also used in businesses to attract tourists (Sobh and Belk 2012). This behaviour was discouraged by the Middle East PR Association, which suggested a 50 US dollars' limit for a gift's value (Middle East Public Relations Association 2014).

Looked at from an anthropological point of view, the aspects of *karam* are gift giving, hospitality, generosity and reciprocity. These aspects are common to all cultures, however, they may be practised in a different manner in this area. Sobh et al. (2013) have pointed out that hospitality was important for Arabs because it helped them to survive in the hard conditions of the desert. This meant any traveller was given a place to sleep and food, without asking any questions. However, Sobh et al. (2013) believe that this type of hospitality is no longer practised, as society has changed, the country has developed, and people no longer live in harsh conditions, and so there is no need to aid travellers. Some cultural practices still remain, such as the hospitality rituals, which means that in the Arabian Gulf area, people are either guests or hosts for up to seven days a week (Sobh et al. 2013). The researchers also pointed out that *karam* is recommended by the *Qu'ran*, and thus individuals may be encouraged to practise it because of this. Sobh et al. (2013) discussed the details of Arab hospitality:

Traditionally, a stranger is to be housed and fed for 3 days without expectation of reciprocity or even a question about who he is. Protecting guests, entertaining them, and feeding them properly was and is still considered essential in many Arab societies, including the ones we are studying. Such hospitality is a necessity in order to earn a reputation for generosity. Arabs still proudly mention the tale of the pre-Islamic hero Haatim Al-Taa'i who slaughtered his horse to honor and feed his guests. His story is used by many as an example of how a man can win fame and respect for spending all of his means to feed his guests. (Sobh et al. 2013, p.5)

In order to understand Middle Eastern *karam*, researchers need to look at Bedouin hospitality, because it has a different meaning to Western hospitality (Barnes 2013). In Arab hospitality, strangers or foreign people are well treated, and while Arabs say 'my house is your house', the guests should not take it literally; they should be good guests, because the reputation of the house needs to be respected (Barnes 2013). The rituals are described in research by Sobh et al. (2013):

Older guests are usually more honoured and seated in a central place in the majlis on the right hand side of the host. The host will kiss their cheeks and forehead, younger guests and children will come to the elderly guest and kiss their hands as a sign of respect. Guests are served Arabic coffee and dates at their arrival, then tea and dinner is served, depending on the length and

purpose of the visit. Guests are served and are not expected to serve themselves. Arabic coffee is an important symbol of Arab Bedouin hospitality. It used to be roasted, ground, and prepared in front of the guest. (Sobh et al. 2013, p. 10)

The guest will also bring a gift in the form of dessert and, when leaving, will choose a bottle of perfume as a gift from a tray of perfumes. Shryock (2004) added that hospitality is closely tied to reputation, as hosts try their best to please the guest in order to maintain their reputation. While *karam* is practised and respected, bribery, on the other hand, is not viewed as being positive behaviour, and the Islamic religion condemns bribery. An-Nabhani (2003, p.1) notes that in the Prophet Mohammed's Statements it is stated clearly that bribery is not acceptable "The Messenger of Allah cursed the briber, bribe-taker and the mediator, meaning the one who walks between the two." An-Nabhani (2003), furthermore, added that in the *Qu'ran* there is no clear specification of what bribery entails, and therefore the interpretation of the text would be that all types of bribery are forbidden, even when they are used for positive purposes, e.g., to reveal the truth, or to help an individual, or for a negative purpose, such as hiding the truth. One example, however, is given, the fact that gifts given to governors or judges are viewed as bribes. In research about hospitality in Jordan, Shryock (2004) interviewed Arab tribespeople on the subject of *karam*. One of the business men that the author interviewed, Awadh al-Dwaykat, claimed:

Karam is like a tax we take from each other. This tax used to be a substitute for government. The tribes had no government from above. Whenever strong government is established, he argued, *karam* will gradually disappear, since only the government can tax the people (Shryock 2004, p. 50)

It is important to note these changes in the traditional culture in order to understand the environment in which PR practitioners work. *Karam* and business are practised together, and Arabic cities, such as Dubai, use Arab hospitality as a selling point with which to attract tourists and businesses (Barnes 2013). Kuokkanen (2003 cited in Sobh and Belk 2012, p.2) states that *karam* is "an act of openness to the other that helps to bring the other (guest) temporarily within the sphere of family, even if they come as a stranger". Gift giving and bribing journalists is not practised only in the Middle East. However, it is easier to draw the boundary between gift giving and

bribery in Western culture. Bribery, using gifts for the media, is a problem that is shared by many countries and cultures. Research reveals that the British media were also corrupted by PR practitioners (Corporate Watch UK 2003). A report by Corporate Watch UK (2003) states that research by the International Public Relations Society shows that the bribery of journalists still takes place in Central and Southern Europe and that it rarely happens in Western Europe and North America. However, Corporate Watch UK (2003) pointed out that in Western countries some practices that are clearly unethical, e.g., journalists being hired by PR agencies as freelancers to also write stories that provide a positive image of the company. This practice is clearly a conflict of interest. The report suggests that it is rather difficult to research how often this practice takes place (Corporate Watch UK 2003).

The results of this thesis have revealed that *karam* is important in SA society, and this traditional habit has crossed the boundary from being practised in the family to being practised in the business field. *Karam* has a negative side in PR in the Middle East. This is because when *karam* is involved in the relationship between PR and journalists it is viewed as being unethical. *Karam* is manifested mainly through gift giving to journalists in return for publishing positive news about companies. This is seen as being culturally acceptable if compared to the US practice, where gift giving is strictly forbidden in codes of ethics (Ward 2013). In the Middle East, offering soft drinks or small gifts is seen as etiquette, although it was pointed out that, at certain events, envelopes with cash inside were given (Ward 2013). MEPRA has tried to discourage this behaviour, as previously mentioned, however, because MEPRA cannot impose this rule legally, it is rather difficult to know if it is respected. The association has recognised that gift giving is a part of the Arabic culture, however, it wondered what the limit of gift giving is and how PR practitioners can be penalised for crossing the limit (Middle East Public Relations Association 2014).

Apart from these unethical practices, PR practitioners also resort to manipulation when they do not want an article published, threatening an end to cooperation with the journalist, or offering a more interesting story for publication (Corporate Watch UK 2003). White (2015) revealed that, in the UK also, corporations are bribing

journalists to write positive articles and he revealed that media outlets depend on political individuals and corporations. Bribing journalists has been reported in Nigeria, the Philippines, Colombia and Ukraine also (White 2015). While bribery seems to be common around the world, the question is whether its cultural origins are necessarily the same.

The findings have revealed that PR practitioners' perception of their relationship with journalists is positive, even though many aspects that were revealed by the interviewees cannot be considered to be positive, such as the fact that the relationship with the media needs to be maintained through gift giving, otherwise journalists are not willing to publish materials. As Participant 24 revealed:

I make relations stronger through giving them gifts. Those journalists who like to receive gifts, if I stop giving them gifts, they will stop publishing my news, so I need to give them gifts. The gift giving, this is something major in our work. For example, if I won't give a journalist a gift, he would not be reliable for us, and our relations would not be strong. Gift giving is one of the most important techniques to make a strong relation with the journalists. The CEO gives the PR manager a specific budget only for the gift giving and to make a good relation to the journalists.

Another unethical form of behaviour that has been revealed in the findings is that companies hire journalists to work in newspapers in order to have positive coverage in the media and, moreover, if the company has a contract with a newspaper in which the company advertises, the outlet will not publish negative news. This behaviour of hiring journalists as PR practitioners occurs also in Western European countries and Central America (Corporate Watch UK 2003).

Another type of censorship, for instance, financial censorship, has been discussed by researchers, such as Chomsky in an article on the propaganda model of the media (Chomsky 1989). The author has taken a critical view of Western media in relation to the conflict of interest between advertising and the editorial function in media organisations. The theory states that the manufacturing of news is influenced by media ownership and advertising and its purpose is to influence the publics (Ibid.).

The results of this study have revealed that in SA there is a type of financial censorship, which means PR practitioners and journalists will not criticise companies that have a financial interest in, or that sponsor, their company. In SA, this type of censorship is maintained through financial bribes between journalists and PR practitioners, which means journalists will avoid writing negative news unless they get some financial interest from the PR practitioners. This behaviour is also maintained by companies, who even have a budget for gift giving and who thus encourage bribery. While this behaviour of giving gifts may have come from the culture of hospitality, in the relationships between the journalists and practitioners, this behaviour may have crossed the line into bribery. Participant 4 admitted that “I think in Saudi Arabia I can notice there is bribery through giving expensive gifts to journalists, and so PR officers are lying to make a good image for their organisation”.

In conclusion, the current literature suggests that *karam* still affects Saudi culture, and it particularly affects the relationships between journalists and PR. This cultural feature is embedded in Arab societies in such a way that it affects society both socially and economically, implicitly influencing the business world, and thus also PR practice. The thesis found that *karam* is used in the relationship between journalists and PR practitioners. The participants, however, did not see it as a bribe, but as being beneficial, because it shows appreciation for the service they provide, similarly to a market exchange and as an insurance for journalists’ reliability. Moreover, given the fact that PR practitioners’ main responsibility in SA is protocol, which means receiving guests, PR practitioners feel that it is part of their job to have *karam* behaviour, in order to keep the image of the company clean and intact. If the practitioner fulfils his *karam* duties, the management will appreciate him more than the other PR practitioners. *Karam* is therefore viewed as being a positive and, mostly, as being an ethical practice that reinforces the relationships between clients and the company. This does not mean respondents have a distorted view of the concept of ethics, but that the practice of *karam* perhaps blurs the line between ethical and unethical practices.

Another cultural practice that is affecting PR ethics and knowledge is negative *wasta*. Negative *wasta* is a concept that is relevant to answering the question about the importance of knowledge to professional practice, because *wasta* is practised often in state institutions. *Wasta* is one of the cultural features that is still practised today (Buchele 2008). According to Aldraehim et al. (2012) *wasta* is perceived as being negative by society, because it shows favourable treatment to certain individuals while discriminating against others, especially in the employment sector. This has an effect on PR, resulting in the employment of many unqualified individuals (Aldraehim et al. 2012). A study on the implications of a political and economic system that relies on *wasta* in the state of Jordan, reveals that *wasta* mediates employment, and it is also associated with nepotism, bias and even bribery (Brandstaetter et al. 2015). This effect on the society implies that perhaps *wasta* also has an influence on PR. It is important to discuss the concept of *wasta* in this thesis because this concept is strongly related to the tribe. Tribal relations preceded Islam, and before states were established and laws were enforced, and individuals found stability in their tribal identity and managed to survive in the harsh environment thanks to solidarity between tribes, and therefore through *wasta* (Brandstaetter et al. 2015).

The tribe and the family affect the individual's life, job opportunities and career. The tribe's connections are able to aid individuals by finding a job, thanks to *wasta*. *Wasta* has been defined as "an Arabic term that refers to an implicit social contract, typically within a tribal group, which obliges those within the group to provide assistance (favourable treatment) to others within the group" (Barnett et al. 2013, P. 41). Badran (2014) noted that *wasta* has its roots in the tribe, and that *wasta* still exists, because the tribe still exists in Arab countries. *Wasta* has also been seen as an informal influence that is particularly vital for some companies. *Wasta* is similar to *guanxi* in China, *jeitinho* in Brazil and *svyazi* in Russia (Barnett et al. 2013). In China, *guanxi* has an important role in business relationships and, thanks to this cultural feature, business and relationships are created (Millington et al. 2005). However, it has often been identified with practices of corruption, due to a culture of gift giving which might be confused with bribery (Ibid.).

Similar practices were found in Eastern Europe, where social networking has an influence on bribing officials (Chavis 2013) Another study states that bribery is often conducted in developing and third world countries, where personal connections are vital (Leigh and Mirko 2002). Al-Hussain and Al-Marzooq (2015), however, claim that *wasta* is different, if compared to similar practices, because it has a powerful influence on recruitment and promotion. Even though *wasta* is heavily practised, it is not viewed as a positive practice. For example, Arab media show *wasta* as a negative concept, despite the proverbs that express and promote it “Lucky is the person whose uncle is the governor”, “Only those who have a ladder can climb” (Mohamed and Mohamad 2011, p. 5). Gardner (2010, pp. 154-155) defined *wasta* as:

Strictly translating into ‘intermediary’ or ‘intermediary means’, Wasta is a way to get there. When I say that I have a wasta in the Traffic Directorate, it means that I’ve got somebody there who can help me cut through the red tape. They can take care of my problem. But that term really evolved new meanings—now you can say ‘Oh, his dad is a real wasta’, meaning that he can get stuff done for you. So it refers to a person. But you can also think of it as a process: ‘wasta does its worth’. You’re not talking about a specific person anymore. Or “with wasta you can do anything. You better get wasta” is a very common clause in speech. If you have wasta, you can get it done in a day. It means you can get it done if you have a way—an intermediary way, a way to get in, or someone inside the system. People even talk about Vitamin W—that’s wasta.

Wasta is a cultural feature that has been preserved in modern society because of the strong tribal and family connections that are still present today. “The family is the most important social institution in SA. Besides the tribe, it is the chief source of identity and the focus of loyalty” (Buchele 2008, p.106). Research shows that most businesses in SA are family businesses and are open to family members and “form the welfare safety net for all members of the extended family” (Buchele 2008, p.106) It is important to note that all businesses are hierarchical and, due to this, every decision the superior takes, has to go through a chain of command which slows the process of decision making down. Buchele (2008, p.146) stated that:

Going through the regular channels is practically impossible, so wasta-clout or influence- is vital to get things done, either within the law or in

circumvention of it. If you have *wasta*, a student at a smart commercial college once told me,' the *mutawwa* [religious police] will bring you drink. But by and large, foreigners who come to work in the kingdom have no choice but put their trust in their employer's *wasta*, and businesspeople in their Saudi partner's.

Buchele (2008) has pointed out that this type of behaviour could be considered corruption in Western countries, but in the Arabian Gulf region it is regarded as an accepted continuation and expansion of a culture of relationships and favours. Badran (2014) added that *wasta* affects communication with native people and is seen as a kind of currency, especially in the Arabian Gulf region. *Wasta* appeared as a type of mediation of conflict between tribes, to solidify social connections and the status of the tribe. This tradition became a method for the individual to take care of family interests, and it evolved, now it provides for individual interests. Badran (2014) believes the old version of *wasta* represented an individual who fought for the group, while the new *wasta* means that the group fights for the individual.

The negative effects of this practice are felt by those who work in companies and who are not related. Allowing *wasta* can bring family issues inside the business because it lowers the level of employee satisfaction and determines a lack of motivation in their job. Nepotism happens because of social relations, not with the purpose of corruption. Research shows the negative effects of *wasta* on businesses, as employees offer jobs to unqualified people just because they are relations (Aldraheim et al. 2012). Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) pointed out that efforts have been made to stop *wasta* by using laws and transparency; however, it is rather difficult to eliminate, because it is so integrated into individuals' lives.

The results of the findings confirm this negative aspect of *wasta* and reveal that companies and institutions' management use *wasta* to hire new employees. This thesis has found that the way the PR sector is affected by *wasta* is through the fact that new employees who are unqualified, or who are not suitable to work in any department in a company, are sent to the PR department, as it is seen as being a protocol department that is suitable for any individual with any educational background or experience.

7.3 Organisational professionalism

As was discussed in the previous section, individuals are hired in PR departments without having any PR educational background. It is important to state that the institutionalising of the profession and its jurisdiction are weak, and a lot of negotiation and shaping of what PR is actually happens during employment in organisations that employ practitioners. The thesis therefore looks at organisational professionalism in order to understand professional development and examines how organisations influence the shape of PR. Muzio and Kirkpatrick (2011) have stated that some professions are influenced and developed by companies and cannot exist as independent practices. These types of professions, such as IT and advertising, are based on knowledge and require individuals who are innovative and have a sense of entrepreneurship. These organisations have their own rules and training and create the jurisdiction from which the professions serve the organisations' interests (Muzio and Kirkpatrick 2011).

Research shows that SA citizens occupy most public sector jobs, while foreign workers occupy 90 percent of private sector jobs (General Authority for Statistics 2016). The positions that exist in the public sector, including PR positions, are created with approval from the government, but the institution or organisation does not have an influence on employment or on creating its policies (Mazawi 2005). Individuals that work in the public sector work with an unlimited contract, they do not risk losing their jobs, the wages are higher than those in the private sector and, moreover, having a job in the public sector is viewed as being a citizen's right (Mazawi 2005). In SA, given the weakness of the professional organisation, it is reasonable to assume that the sense of what the profession is, what the professional tasks are, and how professionals act, will be shaped within the employing organisation by the culture and structure of the state and of public organisations in SA. This means that certain positions in institutions are not available even for highly qualified and suitable candidates because they are blocked. This also indicates that perhaps individuals do not tend to change positions during their careers, and this

suggests that individuals cannot change or develop their careers at a faster pace, as positions are blocked.

This is the context in which individuals learn the meaning of professionalism. Research indicates that, in this environment, there is no development of the profession, as new ideas and change are not introduced, individuals do not change positions. The commercial sector, on the other hand, is different, as it hires individuals based on contracts, so it has a high turnover rate (Mazawi 2005). The private sector is more dynamic, it changes more, although it is smaller than the public sector. It could therefore be stated that the state sector influences the shape of the profession, and the profession's performance, in a particular way, while the commercial sector, which is occupied by individuals from different cultures, Western companies and professionals works in a different way. The results of the research suggest that individuals believe that if qualified individuals entered the PR sector, this would improve it greatly.

The results of this research suggest that in organisations that hire individuals without PR degrees, the PR purpose in an organisation is not understood. Hiring only individuals who have skills and abilities that are considered helpful in the field, such as experience in journalism and charisma, organisations shape the PR occupation in SA into an occupation that is based on administrative, secretarial and protocol duties, with no basis in PR knowledge. Moreover, the results suggested that employees who prove inefficient in their jobs are not fired and are instead transferred to the PR department. Additionally, individuals who are hired through *wasta* in the company, and who are viewed as being unsuitable for any position in the organisation, are also sent to the PR department. PR departments are therefore, to a certain extent, a way in which the larger problems with *wasta* are dealt with. This means that those who are viewed as being inefficient, but who also need to be employed, are sent to PR as this area is viewed as being less risky, as it does not affect the activities of the institution.

This suggests that although participants in the research stated that skills, charisma and journalism knowledge are more important than PR theoretical knowledge, the

employment of PR practitioners is not fulfilled through these criteria. This suggests that an individual with a set of skills and journalism knowledge will be successful in this job, but these skills do not guarantee access to a PR position, if unqualified individuals with *wasta* are hired, and inefficient individuals in their jobs with *wasta* are transferred to this department. The fact that practitioners do not take part in the organisation meetings also means that they do not have a word in the development of the organisation, which means they only fulfil the duties and orders they are given. This does not leave room for development in the profession.

7.4 Culture and profession

This thesis has previously examined how cultural practices, such as *wasta*, *karam* and the Islamic religion influence ethical practices in SA. In this section, the thesis examines the subject of culture and profession. The section is divided in two parts. The first one is called Societal Culture and it examines, in particular, how Islamic culture, traditions, Saudi exceptionalism, self-censorship, conservatism, the family and the tribe, and *wasta* affect PR practice. The second one is called Organisational Performance and analyses how state sector organisations shape PR performance.

7.4.1 Societal culture

The thesis analyses the cultural tensions between tradition and modernisation that run through the society, but that also affect the performance and understanding of PR. The results of the research suggest that practitioners continuously juggle doing particular tasks, such as protocol, administration, writing press releases, but also have to perform them in a way that respects cultural traditions and societal rules.

Additionally, to this, it is important to look at the influence of culture, as previous research on the subject of culture and PR has mostly used Hofstede's theories and has measured culture by the strict and rigid factors that Hofstede developed. Hofstede's dimensions have been used by researchers as a framework in intercultural communication research (Kent and Taylor 2011). However, this theory is not applicable in the study of cultures, because cultures cannot be measured by looking at their common features while ignoring unique cultural concepts (Sriramesh 2012).

Moreover, Hofstede's theories suggest that culture is static and does not change. The results indicate that Saudi society changes, which opposes Hofstede's theory that culture is static, and this also shows that Western theories do not apply to non-Western societies, such as the Saudi one. Saudi society also has distinct cultural features, such as the Islamic culture and Saudi exceptionalism. With regard to intercultural communication, however, the respondents' opinion is unknown. Nevertheless, these would be interesting gaps to examine through future research.

Religion is an important aspect of SA lifestyle and it is also a part of its business practices. The Islamic faith is present in all areas of Saudi life (Rahman and Muktar 2014) and also has a role in strengthening family and tribal ties (Al-Ahmed 1987). Islam has a role in the ethical behaviour of individuals, and the practising of Islamic duties improves individuals' reputation (Al-Ahmed 1987). Religious rituals at work improve individuals' productivity and everyday life practices are combined with religious practices (Buchele 2008; Abdullah 2010). The fast development in SA did not affect Islam, as the local population has managed to embrace both technology and religion and to embed religion in all these practices (Donohue and Esposito 1982; Kenney 2013). For example, smartphone applications were created for individuals who wished to read Islamic quotations (Kenney and Moosa 2014). Additionally, the royal family and the religious leaders have a strong relationship with it (Beg 2008), and religious leaders have the authority to influence political decisions and to create religious laws, called *Fatwas*, which also affect the media (Awad 2010). Facey et al. (2006, p.4) noted;

While Saudi society has forged many fundamental changes in recent decades, it has maintained an unbroken link with its roots through Islam and the Arabic language, two of mankind's most powerful and enduring legacies.

The thesis' results have revealed that Islam has an ethical code that encourages practitioners to be ethical, honest and trustworthy in their work, and Islam is also used in everyday communication with the public and in business practices. Due to the blend of traditions and religions, SA society can be considered an Islamic culture. Religion is embedded in all aspects of society's life, for example, the government

and the local culture are based on the Islamic religion. The interview findings suggested that Islamic culture affects all areas of life. It was interesting to see that some interviewees confused Islamic culture with Saudi culture. Still, Islamic culture was considered a sensitive subject for discussion in PR work. Islamic culture affects also the way individuals perform their jobs, as individuals' professional activities are regulated by Islam. Abdullah (2004) explained:

The aim of such regulation is to ensure fair and equitable transactions among parties involved and to prevent injustice and oppression; for the general goals of the Islamic Syariah or al-maqasid al-ammah lis-syariah are guaranteeing the prevalence of interests and benefits of man and society by promoting good or al-makruf in such form as equity, justice and fairness and suppressing evil or al-munkar in such form as discrimination, tyranny and oppression. (Abdullah 2004, p. 9)

The thesis' results revealed that Islamic culture has such an influence on PR that practitioners avoid making sensitive references, such as those related to sexuality, as the society would consider it immoral. Moreover, PR practitioners have to ensure that aspects of Islamic culture are respected. Additionally, gender aspects are also a sensitive issue in the media as, for example, only pictures showing women wearing hijabs will be published. Participant 22 explained "we need to publish the news without photos, because in Islam women need to cover their hair and be modest, so we will publish only pictures of women who wear at least hijabs". Islam therefore obliges individuals to be ethical and professional in their work, which means it has an effect on PR professionals' work as well.

Another way in which Islam affects PR practitioners' work is through language. Religion is actually present in everyday language, as Buchele (2008, p.93) noted "before embarking on a task, from starting their car to sitting down to a meal, people invoke divine protection by muttering the first word of the Koran "Bismillah"- in the name of God". The results of the thesis have shown how practitioners use certain language when communicating with the public, or with journalists, and have admitted to using language to influence the public. For example, the usage of religious quotations in messages. Participant 26 stated:

We do use the Islamic themes in our PR activities. For example, we had a campaign called Smile and we tried to influence the target audience through using some of Prophet Mohammed's statements, (smiling to your brother is a good deed).

Religion is used in language not only when communicating with external publics, but also in business meetings. As the findings show, Islamic values are added to the language, for instance, by mentioning the name of God. One cultural element that influences PR practitioners is Saudi exceptionalism. The term was used to describe the general perception of respondents that their country, and they as individuals, are uniquely based on the religious connection they have to the land. This perception is also reinforced by the government of SA. King Abdulaziz stated:

This sacred land of ours makes it duty binding on us that we should work hard to ensure all that serves its interests. We will do our utmost in this regard, until we have achieved all our goals and Muslims are assured of security and comfort. (Al-Kilani 2001, pp.76-77)

The term 'Saudi exceptionalism' was inspired by the term 'American exceptionalism' and was adopted because this perception of uniqueness has been seen as being similar to American exceptionalism (Madsen 1998). The idea of exceptionalism comes from the fact that this particular society believes they have the responsibility to save the world (Madsen 1998), and this belief can be seen in the interviews. For example, Participant 26 stated that "Saudi Arabia is a different country from the rest of the world, we have similar habits to the Arabian Gulf states, and Saudi Arabia has a unique thing, which is the two holy places, Mecca and Medina." For this reason, it can be considered that one cultural feature that characterises the SA population is Saudi exceptionalism. Saudi exceptionalism has an influence on individuals, since the respondents reflected a wish to protect their traditions and religion, and this clearly shows a conservative viewpoint

Due to the fact that Saudi exceptionalism determines a wish to preserve traditions and to protect religion, and also determines conservatism, this view of the world influences how individuals think, work and communicate. For PR practitioners, this is translated through a conservative world view, through using self-censorship and

religious themes in communicating. Conservatism influences practitioners work through gender separation, respecting privacy and boundaries, and it is also connected to the family and the tribe, which are connected to *wasta* and *karam*.

The results of the research show that conservatism is reflected in certain cultural sensitivities that are not discussed in a social context, and these are strictly related to privacy, for example, discussing extramarital affairs or drinking habits (Al-Mutair et al. 2014). Additionally, conservatism favours gender separation in social settings and encourages modest clothing (World Trade Press 2010). The findings suggest that practitioners need to take into consideration the introduction of new ideas or technology to this conservative society. The results indicate that, even though Saudi society was, in the past, resistant to certain changes, individuals eventually adapted to it. Changes that happen in the country of SA have been determined by economic development, numerous reforms that were applied by the government, the introduction of technological communication, the internet and education, which were determined by a high number of Saudi students travelling abroad (Facey et al. 2006; Kenney and Moosa 2014; Friedman 2015). All these changes are introduced and monitored by governmental institutions together with religious leaders (Facey et al. 2006; Kenney and Moosa 2014). The changes have determined a rise in the quality of life for Saudi citizens, an increasing number of women in the work place, and they have determined changes in the family structure, as large families have shrunk to nuclear family units (Al-Ahmed 1987; Al-Hussain and Al-Marzooq 2015). Additionally, access to international media has also determined a growing demand for cultural products (Mellor et al. 2011).

Conservatism affects PR practitioners' work, for example, when writing press releases or news they need to show conservative views. Conservatism is also characterised through the fact that society is slow to accept change. One example was given by a participant who mentioned how society did not accept the idea of tourism but, in time, even conservative cities were open to the idea of carnivals. Most practitioners also showed a conservative viewpoint, agreeing with the fact that

traditions are beneficial. However, only a few participants viewed them as being restrictions on society and obstacles to progress.

The interviews have shown that Saudi PR practitioners show a conservative view and have a generally strong desire to maintain traditions and cultural values. Despite this, they show they are open to change, as long as the traditions are maintained. There is clearly a tension between tradition and change. Although practitioners did not mention Western values, the literature on the subject of conservatism and change in SA has suggested that, historically, this tension has often appeared, and it is related to Western values (Al-Kilani 2001). It is important to discuss this here because, as the data analysis chapter, 'Understanding Saudi Arabia PR practice. The interrelationship between knowledge, culture and public communication and the Professionalising PR practice in Saudi Arabia' has shown, the PR materials that are used to teach in SA are predominantly Western. Moreover, this thesis has argued that Western theories are not applicable to non-Western countries, such as SA.

The Saudi population has been resistant in the past to changes, for fear of affecting their own culture. For example, the rejection of Western values was explained by Al-Kilani (2001), who said that these were seen as being materialistic, and this was why Western countries were involved in violent conflicts, and this cultural feature would also produce conflicts within Saudi culture. Moreover, Al-Kilani (2001) believes that Western society has stripped away the moral values that held communities together. This perception may have come from the way Western values were seen in Western colonies. For example, Serpell (1995) pointed out that missionaries in Africa built schools and taught students using a religious view on all social and moral behaviour. They were also promoting Western civil life, as well as the Western style of commerce and administration. The idea was to produce a cultural change, and this eased the colonisation process (Serpell 1995). Posusney and Doumato (2003) have suggested that although Middle Eastern countries' lifestyle and technology were influenced by the west, there have also been reactions against globalisation, through making individuals aware of their Muslim or Saudi identity, and through reinforcing conservatism. Gorney (2016) has also stated that Saudi society wishes to preserve its

identity while, at the same time, accepting the fact that the world changes. For example, religious leaders have adapted new technology by developing smartphone applications through the use of which the users can access and read Islamic quotations (Kenney and Moosa 2014). In addition, change may be brought by the number of Saudi students who study abroad, whose number has increased since the government started a scholarship educational programme in 1960 (Taylor and Albasri 2014). The numbers increased from 5,000 students before 2000, to over 100,000 students studying just in the USA. Saudi students have also chosen to study in countries like Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Spain and Italy, but the USA is by far the preferred choice of most Saudi students. Of the foreign students who study in US schools, Saudi students represent 5.4 percent (Taylor and Albasri 2014).

The thesis' results have revealed that although the interviewees expressed a wish to preserve traditional values, they also showed an openness to change. Participant 18 suggested that many Saudi students went abroad to study in Western countries for several years. The question is: how has this process affected Saudi culture and PR in SA, if it is assumed that a proportion of these students study PR in Western schools and in a Western context.

Conservatism is also reflected through the usage of self-censorship. Self-censorship is seen as a guide to successful work, and companies encourage self-censorship through their corporations' cultures (Al-Kablan 2014). The thesis has found that Saudi practitioners use self-censorship to protect themselves. This is why the interviewees viewed self-censorship as being a positive quality. Moreover, self-censorship is considered positive because it is seen as being an Islamic value. The findings revealed that self-censorship is seen as being a positive guide in PR practice, and that it is taught by society and by knowing society's traditions and customs. As Participant 18 stated:

I think it is important to have self-censorship to organise the work of the journalist and PR officers. I think self-censorship helps people to practise in a good way. For example, if I write a report about the discovery of a statue, and

in the report I mention this statue was an idol in the era before Islam, I will receive bad feedback from the public, because I touched something holy in their religion, which is mentioning the idol, and the idol goes against the core of Islam.

Self-censorship is thus seen as being part of the local culture, as self-censorship equals a moral guide that respects local traditions and habits, privacy, and also religion. Some participants consider that censorship in SA is not really practised, for several reasons. Firstly, there is self-censorship, which is carried out mainly so as not to offend society (several examples have been given to show how, when public campaigns or adverts were thought to be immoral, they were, in the first place, criticised and then penalised by society). Although PR practitioners have developed within the society and are aware of its cultural features, their development is not complete, as society and the government still mediate their learning. Society penalises those who cross laws into territory that is considered immoral, by forcing companies to withdraw their campaigns or commercials. As the findings suggested, criticism is allowed, as long as it is constructive, and official information that is sent out is not distorted in order to manipulate public opinion. As Participant 14 revealed:

One of the rules is when the government institutions send any news to the newspapers, they are not allowed to change the style of writing and to change any part of the news. If the newspaper frames the news in a way that will mislead the readers, I, as a government institution, will be able to sue the newspaper according to the law. But the reality is that in Saudi Arabia you cannot do anything, and the Ministry of Information and Media that created the rule of censorship do not practise it.

The same opinion was shared by other participants, who felt that censorship is starting to weaken in SA. For example, in the past, materials about corruption in an organisation would not be published. Now, however, if there is clear proof of corruption, the information will not be censored. As was previously stated, society sometimes plays the role of the censor. Participant 22 believes censorship is practised because Saudi society is conservative and reacts if offensive material is made public. For example, the jewellery company that used adverts showing a woman with a cleavage wearing jewellery had to withdraw the adverts after the public complained. Several participants, however, stated that there are certain

subjects that are censored, e.g., politics, religion and sexuality. Criticism against the government or institutions is not accepted, and criticism of Islam and also of religious leaders is not allowed. Finally, any visual or explicit material that is considered sexual will not be published.

In addition to displaying a conservative view through using self-censorship, Saudis also value privacy and boundaries. This is shown by their preference for spending more time in the family circle, rather than interacting with people outside this circle (Buchele 2008). SA public places are also organised in such a way as to respect families' privacy. For example, restaurants and parks have private family sections to offer families privacy from foreign eyes (Buchele 2008). The findings have suggested that the boundaries that protect individuals are cultural and are represented by traditions and customs, such as respecting the individual's privacy and protecting the reputation of the tribe. The findings have suggested that privacy is highly valued within society in SA.

The findings have shown that these aspects are respected at all levels of society and if these unwritten rules are not respected, usually those who break the rules are penalised, for instance, when Saudi females complained about the lack of partition at a conference. Saudi PR practitioners operate within very clearly drawn boundaries of what is and is not allowed, as is demonstrated by censorship. It could also be argued that the practice is also heavily shaped by self-censorship, which could be seen as the way in which practitioners internalise cultural prohibitions.

The Saudi social environment is heavily shaped by the way in which the distinction between the private and public spheres of life are drawn. These are also linked to the subject of women covering their faces. Research shows that women in PR are also subject to cultural influences that are determined by the family and the tribe (Al-Hussain and Al-Marzooq 2015). At the moment, statistics suggest that women's number in Saudi Arabia's workforce is increasing, although there is no clear information available about the PR sector (Al-Hussain and Al-Marzooq 2015).

Statistics from countries such as the UK, reveal that the number of female PR practitioners is higher than that of male practitioners. The latest statistics show that the PR industry consists of 61 percentage females and 39 percentage males in the UK (CIPR State of the Profession Survey 2017). Historically, women made up a small number in PR across Western countries, and the predominance of women in PR now is due to the fact that there is a perception that women have good interpersonal skills (Yeomans 2007). Yeomans (2007) believes that women are attracted to PR, since they believe and society as well believes that they better at building relationships.

Participants have stated that women covering their face does not interfere with them having jobs that require contact with the public, such as working in PR. Moreover, participants have suggested that the number of female PR practitioners in SA is increasing. However, it must be noted that this is their personal opinion and that there is neither research nor available statistic to show the number of female practitioners in SA or to indicate whether this number is rising or falling. The thesis has not focused on gender issues, but mostly on issues that are related to culture influencing practice. However, a few respondents acknowledged the small number of women working in PR and praised the quality of their work. Looking at SA PR demonstrates that the question of gender and PR practice are first of all, cultural, and it depends on broader questions of gender and social roles, knowledge and access to various spheres of life, such as business, education and public life.

The importance of family, tribe and class structure in SA were previously discussed, and it was stressed how family and tribe are seen as being a protection in the absence of government, due to the fact that most of the population's ancestry comes from the tribes, and individuals are still strongly tied to them (Al-Garni 2000; Buchele 2008).

The cultural feature, *wasta*, comes from the importance that is given to the tribe. The 'Political, cultural and public communication environment of Saudi Arabia' chapter has shown that individuals trust only people from their own tribe (Wilson and Graham 1994) and *wasta* is considered to be a social contract that obliges the individual to give favourable treatment to other members of the tribe (Barnett et al.

2013). Although *wasta* has a negative reputation, it can provide positive benefits, such as trustworthy employees. Trust is very important in relationships, and this comes from Islamic teachings (Weir 2010). The Prophet Mohammed, who was a businessman and who was renowned for his integrity, had the title Al-Amin, which is 'the trustworthy one'. The social structures that support Islam are those of a web of family obligations. The family resists, unbroken through time and political changes (Weir 2010), and thus it offers a positive family environment at work together with job opportunities for the younger generations. This aspect has been highlighted also by Weir (Ibid.), who believes that Arab managers prefer to have trustworthy, loyal subordinates, and they value these qualities more than efficiency and organisational skills. This phenomenon may explain why Saudis would rather hire relatives and friends than strangers.

Additionally, the concept of family is so important in this society that individuals' decisions are taken in order to benefit the family (Al-Saif 1997). While the development of the country has changed the SA lifestyle, due to improved infrastructure, city development, the introduction of media, technology and the internet, Saudi society has preserved its social norms, traditions, and the importance of the family has remained and become adapted to the modern lifestyle (Facey et al. 2006). Family is so important that Saudi individuals self-publish books of genealogy and family trees to prove their tribal lineages (Samin 2015).

Family, therefore, is at the core of society and has an economic and political function (Al-Garni 2000). The family also has the role of propagating faith and, according to Islam, its role is to contribute to society (Al-Ahmed 1987), although it was pointed out that, due to economic development, some family structures were reduced to smaller family units (Al-Ahmed 1987). However, despite there being a smaller family unit, family relationships are still very strong (Wier 2010), in fact, older members have authority over younger family members (Cordesman 2003). Family ties are so strong that they cross from social life into business life, as most businesses in SA are family businesses, which are open to other family members. It was also pointed out that if an individual works in a non-family business, they will always try

to find a position for a family member, because the individual is honour bound to do so (Buchele 2008). In fact, business activity is viewed as a “socially useful function” (Ezzi et al. 2014, p.4).

This explains why cultural features, such as *wasta*, are practised in business. The findings have confirmed that the family and the tribe are cultural features that characterise Saudi society in such a way that they affect all aspects of life, including social life and careers. Moreover, individuals will not relocate for better career opportunities if this means separation from their family. The PR environment is certainly affected by this aspect, as PR practitioners give preference to their social life over their career life.

It is important to explain why family is important to SA individuals and what makes it different from a classical notion of ‘family’. As the findings suggest, ‘family’ refers here to parents, children, grandchildren, uncles, aunts and cousins. In society, the individual represents his family, so all of the individuals’ actions have an effect on the family’s life and family reputation. This means that when individuals take decisions, they always consider how it will affect their family.

The tribe is also viewed in the same way as the family but, if compared to the family, the tribes still have a strong influence, both on individuals’ lives and in business. It is reported that when the country was formed in 1932, under King Abdulaziz Al Saud, the tribes were united into a new state (Beg 2008). As a result of this, individuals do not have the nationalistic feeling that Westerners have, but feel more of a connection to the tribe (Kenney 2014). Wilson and Graham (1994, p.36) have pointed out that “the reliance on Arab tribalism and Islam means that a Saudi king, besides being the head of state, is also viewed as the leader of the tribe, as well as the Imam or religious leader of the Kingdom's faithful”. It must be noted that King Abdulaziz tried to strengthen tribal ties by encouraging inter-tribal marriage, and he created laws that have more an influence on communities, rather than on individuals (Al-Kilani 2001). Moreover, SA’s population, which consists of 90 percent ethnic Arabs, is mostly descended from tribes (Al-Ahmed 1987), and until the 1950s about half the

population was still nomadic and all of the individuals still belonged to a tribe (Buchele 2008). It is therefore clear why tribes are still seen as being important, since until a few decades ago tribes had the authority of a state, were independent and had different customs (Buchele 2008). As discussed previously, in the 'Political, cultural and public communication environment of Saudi Arabia' chapter, when the country was formed, hundreds of small tribes were brought together, and because some tribes were in conflict with others, tribes only trusted individuals who belonged to them (Wilson and Graham 1994). From the socio-cultural point of view, this would explain why *wasta* is still used, as jobs are given only to individuals who are considered to be trustworthy, such as those who belong to the tribe.

7.4.2 Organisational performance

In addition to the fact that cultural features influence the practice and behaviour of PR practitioners, there are other factors that shape PR performance, such as state sector organisations. This next section focuses on the subject of organisational performance and it utilises a socio-cultural approach.

PR practitioners in SA develop and learn in a certain environment that influences their development, for instance, the social context, which is affected by Islamic religion, conservatism, Saudi exceptionalism, the importance of family and tribe. Moreover, individuals also learn and develop ideas through the education that is provided by the state, and their occupation is also shaped by the organisations or institutions where they work. The results of this thesis suggest that there is a large influence from the state sector organisations on PR practice, and this is reflected through the fact that there is a slow change, because the institutions tend to be quite stable and traditional. Moreover, the opportunities for career development are limited, and practitioners cannot change positions very often and are blocked in a certain context. In relation to this, the opportunities for learning new contexts and the opportunities for new learning are also quite limited. Although there are signs that there are changes in the PR sector in SA, they are significantly small. For example, the results of this thesis suggest that there are processes underway to restructure PR

departments and to eliminate individuals who have been hired through *wasta* and who have no background in PR or no relationship to PR.

However, generally, there are no significant changes to institutions and organisations. Moreover, results suggest that there are not many opportunities for change and there are no prospects for great development in the PR profession. The state therefore plays an enabling role in the profession through providing access to education, the associations are also allowed to function and offer support to individuals, and job positions are also provided in the state sector.

Using Vygotsky's (1978) framework, which says that an individual's intelligence, and thus his/her knowledge, are formed due to social interactions, the thesis has examined the various instruments that have contributed to the knowledge of PR practitioners, such as the knowledge offered by the state through the state educational institutions and through the training and courses offered by associations. Moreover, the thesis has also looked at how educational institutions have contributed to the intellectual development of practitioners, and how associations have continued this educational and supportive role. Vygotsky (1986) also believed that there are two processes in the individual's development. One is an inter-mental plane, when the individual develops during social interaction with other individuals, and the other is on an intra-mental plane, when the individual develops within themselves. The result is a mind that is the result of both individual and social processes, and therefore it could be said that the PR practitioner's knowledge and decisions are the result of the knowledge learnt by working in the PR environment in SA, and by interacting with Saudi individuals.

Vygotsky (1986) argued that the social interacts with the individual in a certain environment, and this has significant consequences for the development of the individual. In other words, the individual grows and develops thanks to activities that are supervised and controlled by a more knowledgeable individual or institution. For example, in SA, educational institutions have a role in this process, by providing individuals with academic knowledge.

However, the results of this thesis indicate that theoretical knowledge is not appreciated, as it is viewed as not being useful for PR in SA. This shows that educational institutions and associations do not have an active role in shaping the occupation of PR. PR practitioners do not have a strong knowledge base on which they can build their careers. It could be argued that practitioners assume the responsibility for their own education by choosing to learn the knowledge that they believe will be useful in their day to day practice. Associations are not offering educational support, and therefore practitioners attend private courses that allow them to learn from other individuals' experience. The PR association does not offer problem solving knowledge, nor does it offer a professional code of conduct.

This indicates, therefore, that although the state provides education and secure job positions, there is no progress or development within the institutions, and thus there are not many opportunities for change, learning and career movement, and this has an effect on PR practice overall. Despite this, there is a type of professional entrepreneurship which is reflected by small signs that show that some practitioners deal with the PR issues on their own. The interviews suggest that some PR practitioners have formed an informal association. This shows that practitioners recognise that there are issues in the practice and they try to solve them in a certain way. However, the impact on PR in SA is insignificant in terms of professionalization, and there are limited opportunities for the provision of change. This is because these practitioners have formed the association as a closed circle that does not allow access to other individuals. Moreover, the association does not provide expert advice, as it works more like an informal organisation, where individuals consult each other on PR matters. PR practitioners have not considered developing and growing the association due to the fact that there are legal obstacles that stand in its way. When interviewed, informal association members pointed out several issues that arise from the fact that associations in SA must be approved by the government, and this influences the current situation of the PR associations. Most official PR associations' organisers are university teachers, who, according to the interviewees, are not aware of real PR practice and choose to teach courses that are

not very useful to the practitioners, as the information provided there is either not useful (for example, teaching Western theories), or not applicable to real practice. However, research into the membership of the Saudi Association for Public Relations and Advertising showed that these academic professionals also practise, as they work as managers in diverse governmental and private companies' PR departments (Saudi Association for Public Relations and Advertising 2015).

A more detailed look into the findings has suggested that there is a tension between these associations, and this could be related to a power struggle. Furthermore, cultural features of the informal association's practitioners, such as clothing, language, life perspectives and culture in SA, have suggested that their points of view are liberal. It could be pointed out that this is a subjective perspective, however, looking again at the interviews, the research can point to recorded and written evidence that suggests this liberal thinking. For example, Participant 11 said that customs and traditions are restrictions on society and cited the scholar, Ali Alwardi, who believes that customs and traditions are like the psychological illnesses of society, and that traditions, whether good or bad, will stop society from moving forward. Moreover, Participant 11 also suggested that Islamic traditions are restrictive on PR because of gender separation, and as Islamic values discourage the use of music, so some practitioners also do not agree to using it. Modern music is found to be unsuitable for this culture because it is believed that it promotes drugs and fornication, and it is therefore seen as being contrary to Islamic values. However, contrary to Palmer's (2012) and Long's (2005) claims, research shows that music is used in TV and radio in SA (Cordesman 2003). According to Long (2005), while Saudi individuals do listen to music in private, music is not allowed in religious services.

This thesis has found that participants believe that if music is used, for example, in campaigns, a part of the audience will reject the message.

In relation to this discussion of societal restrictions, Pieczka (2006) has considered that social systems are created to give individuals the freedom to allow them to

satisfy their needs. However, findings suggest that some practitioners see society's rules as limiting their needs, and thus there is a disruption between society and the individual. This may also limit PR work. It seems that there is a cultural struggle here between how far religious guidance has to be taken in the way that PR practitioners practise.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on answering the research questions in relation to PR knowledge, culture and public communication. The thesis has examined the theories of the profession, such as those of Yang and Taylor (2013), Jackson (1970) and MacDonald (1995) and has found that the PR occupational group in SA does not fit within the Western definition of the profession.

The thesis has also examined the knowledge that PR practitioners have, such as journalistic knowledge, tacit knowledge, hands-on knowledge and knowledge from their diverse educational backgrounds and has found that there is a contrast between the importance of experience and theoretical knowledge. The key implication of this finding is the correlation between a lack of support from educational institutions and associations, and the knowledge the practitioners have. They compensate by learning from experience, or by adapting some of their diverse knowledge. In other words, educational institutions have an important role in influencing PR and the practitioners, and their lack in providing useful knowledge explains the confusion that is related to PR duties in this field.

This thesis has discussed the subject of the institutionalisation of the profession and has highlighted the fact that although educational institutions provide theoretical knowledge, this knowledge does not support the development of the PR profession. Moreover, professional associations also do not offer relevant training and support for PR practitioners, and they do not have the power to influence laws. In terms of organisational professionalism, this thesis has found that the state is the factor that shapes the PR profession, as it provides the education, it is the main developer of policies and budgets, and it creates jobs.

Another point that was discussed was the role of ethics in relation to the institutionalisation of the profession in Western literature and also in SA. The results of the thesis have indicated that ethics in SA is heavily influenced by religion, and it was argued that, because Islam provides an ethical code that it is used in all aspects of life, there is no need for the development of a special code of ethics for professionals. The results have shown, however, that the PR practice in SA is filled with unethical practices such as *karam*, *wasta*. Practitioners were also confused about the line drawn between a bribe and *karam*, due to the fact that *karam* is a traditional cultural feature embedded in Saudi society. This could lead to the conclusion that a lack of clear rules and encouragement from organisations, by having a *karam* budget, allows practitioners to use *karam* and to bribe. The key indication is that although these cultural elements are seen as being negative, they are still used in the organisations' interests due to a lack of clear legislation and rules. By using Vygotsky's socio-cultural framework, the chapter has also examined the subject of organisational performance, and has looked at the opportunities that PR practitioners have for developing their careers, concluding that there are very few opportunities for change and development. Moreover, by looking at organisational professionalism the thesis has found that the institutionalising of the profession is weak and the employment process actually shapes the PR sector and PR performance as they create the occupations' jurisdiction.

Finally, the thesis has found that there are types of professional entrepreneurship that are reflected in the fact that practitioners have formed informal associations, however, their impact on PR practice would generally be insignificant.

Chapter 8: Conclusion and implications

This thesis has attempted to fill the gap in the literature on PR in SA by developing a greater understanding of the knowledge and practice of PR practitioners in SA with specific focus on the role that cultural features play in this context. To achieve its aim, this thesis combines a socio-cultural approach to the development of knowledge-based practice of public relation with its theoretical framing as professionalised practice that is adopted in much of the existing public relations literature.

Three research questions guided this research: How do cultural factors, such as cultural customs, Islamic culture and religion influence PR practice and PR as an occupational activity in Saudi Arabia? To what extent do public communication factors, such as censorship, self-censorship and media relations influence PR practice? What knowledge do Saudi PR practitioners possess and use, is it a shared knowledge, and are PR practitioners aware of their PR duties, and how do they utilise their knowledge in their practice?

In answering the research questions related to the influence of culture, the thesis has identified a number of cultural features that influence routine work conducted by PR practitioners affecting the way in which they communicate with their public, the way they act in their professional life and the way they organize their work. These features can be summarised as stemming from Islam that regulates and dictates individual's ethical code as well as behaviour and practitioners' identity. In this context the thesis identified in particular Saudi exceptionalism and conservatism. Secondly, strong tribal and family ties affect PR practice through the practice of *wasta*. The cultural feature of *wasta* is responsible for employment of unqualified individuals which determines the overall performance of the PR departments., while another cultural feature —*karam* —affect s the ethical behaviour of practitioners in relations to journalists. Cultural factors thus play a clear and distinctive role both in

the daily performance of PR practice and, to an extent, its current state of institutionalization as a profession in Saudi Arabia.

In answering the research question about knowledge PR practitioners possess and use, the thesis has found that practitioners' knowledge comes from every day experience and this type of knowledge is viewed as important in employing practitioners in PR departments. Therefore, tacit knowledge was viewed as more important and more useful than theoretical, abstract knowledge learnt in universities. Secondly, organisational institutions do not offer many opportunities for individuals for planned professional development to support career and knowledge development as employers tend to be traditional and rather staid institutions. Investigating the role of public communication in professionalization of public relations in SA this thesis has found that censorship is not viewed as a barrier because practitioners use self-censorship, which they view as a useful and positive tool in communication within the context of their Islamic culture.

In conclusion while cultural factors have been shown to influence public relations practice in a number of ways, the structural factor, specifically the State play a equally significant role by shaping public relations work sites. These provide particular conditions for work and learning and viewed from the socio-cultural approach to learning and knowledge development, such as Vygotsky's theory on the development of the individual, this structural factor help to build a culturally-sensitive explanation about the state of public relations practice. Examining professional autonomy of PR practice, the thesis has concluded that in terms of knowledge and learning opportunities provided, the State is seen of prime importance both in enabling and at the same time hindering of the development. Thus, academic knowledge that educational institutions and associations provide is considered not useful both in practice and in establishing standards with the purpose of certification. Professional associations in SA do not have an active role in shaping the PR occupation and they are not involved in raising the standards of work. Due to the fact that state organization have influenced the knowledge PR practitioners acquire, the way they access employment and their work duties, this has produced

practitioners that are not aware of what the concept of PR means and that have weak PR knowledge. To overcome this limitation, educational institutions could develop a knowledge that is suitable to the culture of Saudi Arabia, taking into account that Islam is at the centre of their lives.

The thesis has thus concluded that while there is a lack of theoretical engagement and therefore lack of relevant knowledge and training, there is also a degree of professional entrepreneurship. This means the state of profession is directly related to the way in which the tension between tradition and push to modernisation and change are being dealt with in SA society.

The thesis contributes to the body of knowledge in two main ways: firstly, by revealing a more culturally-sensitive picture of public relations practice in SA that allows practitioners' voices and perspectives to guide the development of the conclusions offered here; secondly, by raising questions about the extent to which existing mainstream theorization of public relations may be limited in their blindness to culture.

The thesis has also contributed to the body of knowledge about Saudi Arabia through a programme of interviews with practitioners that attempted to get as close to the daily realities of practice as possible, cutting across barriers, such as loyalty to the employer, unwillingness to offer unvarnished accounts to a stranger. Previous explanations of the state of PR in Saudi Arabia, such as those of Kirat (2005), Al-Enad (1990), Gaither and Curtin (2007), Bekhit (2009) and Mazawi (2005) have stated that PR was underdeveloped due to the fact that PR practitioners and companies misunderstand the purpose of PR in a company, they are limited to protocol and administration duties, lack of communication with the management and not participating in management decisions. However, no research has managed to investigate deeper the causes of misunderstanding of the role of PR and why practitioners have limited duties in a company. Thus, compared to the older explanations of PR in Saudi Arabia, this thesis has explained the reasons why PR in Saudi Arabia is in its current state. One key factor is the ambivalent role of the State

in shaping PR practice through education and employment and another factor is the strong influence of cultural features.

This thesis has also contributed to the existing knowledge by exploring the way in which societal culture determines the shape of the practice and its professionalization. For example, cultural features, such as religion are used as a personal moral code in PR work, due to the fact that there are no official guides provided by the government, the PR association or by their own companies and institutions.

Another contribution of the thesis has that it found out that there is a problematic nature of abstract knowledge, which determines the disconnection between communication theories and PR practice, which suggests that future research should focus on ways in which professionalisation can be connected to the relevant body of abstract knowledge. This implies that more attention should be paid to the relevance of the knowledge that is made available, not just as knowledge that can be applied to practice, but also as knowledge that can power the development of PR practice, both in terms of the range of tasks undertaken and in the shaping of expectations about the way in which it is both valued and evaluated.

Furthermore, this thesis has also contributed by raising questions about how professional ethics is approached. In the mainstream literature on professional ethics in public relations, the question of religion remains outside the frame of discussion (Hope 2013). The thesis has found that while the concept of profession does have a relation to the quality of work, it is mostly related to skills and not ethics. The vague meaning gives a loose understanding of how individuals need to conduct themselves as professionals, and what code of ethics they need to respect or what unethical practices they are not allowed to undertake. This means that they do not have a clear, official code of ethics that has to be respected. However, the understanding of ethics in Saudi Arabia is different than form Western ethics. The implication of the thesis is that it highlights the fact that the usage of a western meaning of the “ethics” concept is inappropriate because the term in Saudi Arabia has a certain meaning that has

religious and cultural implications. In Saudi Arabia ethics is viewed through an Islamic point of view and as the research has shown, all individuals are expected to possess an inner moral code which has a strong Islamic influence. For this reason, companies might not create an official code of ethics, as it is assumed that individuals have their own personal code of ethics which they will respect. Thus the lack of explicit code of ethics cannot be interpreted unproblematically as a weakness in professionalization of public relations.

Saudi societal culture is shown to shape PR practice and its professionalization. Therefore, the theoretical implication of this thesis is that it questions ideas about universality of public relations, such as those of Grunig's (1978) Excellence theory, which proposed a universal theory of PR that would measure PR practice worldwide. As Holtzhausen et al. (2003) noted, this theory would be indeed difficult to perform in areas where culture influences PR. Grunig's universal theory therefore would be difficult to implement as in Saudi Arabia there is a certain model of PR which is different from other countries. This research provides an opportunity for public relations researchers to further develop public relations models that are suitable for the Saudi Arabia context. These models can be used in the study of public relations in Saudi Arabia and they can be useful in understanding how public relations functions in different countries with a different culture.

On the basis of the findings of this thesis, several recommendations for future research as well as interventions by educational bodies and professional associations can be offered.

First of all the thesis recommends development of research to aid development of knowledge that relates more clearly to SA practice. Secondly, educational institutions and employers should create links in order to improve learning and knowledge development, for example through organized internships. In addition, linking the state to the business sector will improve the career development opportunities in exchange of learning from local work sites.

The thesis also recommends the introduction of more diversity into practice so as to overcome the influence of the State's bureaucratic culture. This would mean the encouragement of women in order that they can enter the PR sector, the better circulation of knowledge and experience amongst practitioners, which would be taken from the private sector experiences. Future research should take into consideration the views of the PR Association's representatives regarding knowledge, the development of the PR sector and of PR training.

Current research has looked at the struggles of PR practitioners in relation to the management, as, according to the interviewees, the managements of companies do not understand the role of the PR department and therefore assign to them duties that are not related to PR. The management also hire unsuitable candidates in PR roles. Further research should examine PR's higher management, and the management of companies, in relation to the PR field, how they understand PR in SA, and the role of *wasta* in employment, in order to offer a different viewpoint on this subject.

This thesis contributions are significant because examining how knowledge, culture and public communication influence the activities of practitioners will allow policy makers, consultants, researchers and theorists to design and develop tools, theories and research that may help to develop the PR discipline in SA and thus deepen the knowledge of PR in this geographical area. For example, theorists on the subject of PR practice in SA can take into consideration the fact that the State has an important role in shaping the PR profession, tacit knowledge and hands-on knowledge and journalism experience are valued more than theoretical PR knowledge is. The State intervenes in two ways in the public relations sector. On the one side, the State is supportive and enables public relations by creating sites and institutions where public relations practitioners work. It must be pointed out as well, that the public sector in Saudi Arabia is quite large. However, the State institutions are bureaucratic, slow moving and rigid and this rigidity undermines some aspects of the development by curbing practitioners' autonomy.

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Appendix 1

Interview Questions in Arabic and English languages



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

Interview Questions: أسئلة المقابلة :

مهنية الاتصال في المملكة العربية السعودية: حالة العلاقات العامة.
Professionalising Communication in Saudi Arabia: The Case of Public Relations.

Public Relations knowledge and experience

1. How did you get into PR and why?
2. What do you need to practice PR?
3. How can someone enter the PR field in Saudi Arabia? Who can be promoted and why?
4. What have you learnt from your educational (school, collage, university) experience that has been useful to you in PR?
5. How do people respond when you tell them you work in PR? Are there any common responses? If so, from whom and do you know why?
6. Can you tell me about your typical day of work? What do you spend your time on?

المعرفة و الخبرة في العلاقات العامة

- كيف دخلت مجال العلاقات العامة ، ولماذا؟
- ماذا تحتاج لممارسة مهنة العلاقات العامة؟
- كيف يمكن للشخص العمل في العلاقات العامة في السعودية؟ ومن يستحق الترقية لمرتبة أعلى؟ ولماذا؟
- تعلمت من تجربتك التعليمية (مدرسة، كلية، جامعة) التي أفادتك خلال ممارستك للعلاقات العامة؟
- ندما تخبر عامة الناس أنك ممارس للعلاقات العامة، ما هو رأيهم في وظيفتك؟ هل هناك آراء مشتركة؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم، من هم أصحاب الإجابات المتكررة. ولماذا؟
- هي المهارات الرئيسية التي يجب أن تتوفر فيمن يمارسون العلاقات العامة؟ ولماذا هذه المهارات تعد الأهم؟
- ما الذي يجعلك تشعر بأنك قد قمت بعمل جيد ؟
- يمكن أن تخبرني أكثر عن يوم عمل تقليدي في مجال العلاقات العامة ؟ في ماذا تقضي وقتك ؟
- برأيك، ما هو أفضل ما في عملك وما هو أسوأ ما فيه ؟
- ما هو نوع العمل الذي تقوم به في العلاقات العامة؟
- ما هي الإشكالات/التحديات التي تواجهك بشكل يومي في العمل؟ ولماذا؟
- تعتقد أن الإدارات الأخرى في جهة عملك لديها معرفة و فهم لمعنى العلاقات العامة و

7. What are the main skills that a PR practitioner should have? Why are these skills more important?
8. What makes you feel like you have done a good job?
9. What do you think is the best thing about your job and what is the worst?
10. What sort of work do you do in public relations?
11. What issues/challenges do you face in your every day work and why?
12. How does your company management understand the PR role/ How do you know this?
13. As a PR practitioner do you take part in company's meetings?
14. Does your company use the PR department for all PR work or do they also rely on independent PR agencies?
15. Tell me what do you think about the practice of PR in Saudi Arabia?
16. Are you a member of a PR association? Why? Tell me more about this, please. If you are a member, do you have any role in the PR association? Do you participate in any events organized by the association? Why or why not?
17. Does membership to a PR association brings any benefits? If, so what benefits does it bring? Ask if so what?
18. What could the association do to improve your PR work?
19. Do you follow PR news? Where? How?
20. How would you characterise PR culture in Saudi Arabia? Is there a PR practice culture and if so what is it like?
21. Are you interested in taking more courses in PR or any type of training in this field? Do you think training helps in your career? And if so, in what sort of way?
22. Are you aware of any projects/ workshops, seminars or campaigns that the PR association conducts? Have you participated in any workshops or projects? Do you think you could get involved in offering or organizing them?

الدور الذي تقوم به ؟ كيف تعلم بذلك؟

- كممارس للعلاقات العامة، هل تشارك في الاجتماعات مع الإدارة العليا؟
- تستخدم جهة عملك قسم العلاقات العامة لجميع أعمال العلاقات العامة، أم أنها تعتمد على وكالات مستقلة للعلاقات العامة؟
- أخبرني عن ممارسة العلاقات العامة في المملكة العربية السعودية؟
- هل أنت عضو في أي جمعية مختصة بالعلاقات العامة ؟ ولماذا؟ أخبرني أكثر حول هذا موضوع، من فضلك. هل لديك أي دور في جمعية العلاقات العامة؟ هل شاركت في أي أحداث التي نظمتها الجمعية؟ لماذا أو لماذا لا؟
- ، الإنتماء إلى جمعيات مختصة بالعلاقات العامة تجلب أي منافع؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم، فما تلك المنافع؟ ولماذا لا؟
- ماذا يمكن للجمعية أن تضيف لك لتحسين أدائك في عمل العلاقات العامة ؟
- هل تتابع أخبار العلاقات العامة ؟ أين؟ كيف؟
- كيف تصف ثقافة العلاقات العامة في المملكة العربية السعودية؟ هل هناك ثقافة ممارسة العلاقات العامة، وإذا كان هناك، مثل ماذا؟
- ل أنت مهتم بالحصول على المزيد من الدورات التدريبية في العلاقات العامة أو أي نوع ريب في هذا المجال ؟ هل تعتقد أن التدريب قد يساعد في حياتك المهنية؟ في ماذا سوف يساعدك؟
- هل أنت على علم بأي مشاريع / ورش العمل، ندوات أو حملات تجريها جمعية العلاقات ؟ هل شاركت في أي ورشة عمل؟ هل تعتقد أنك يمكن أن تشارك في تقديم أو تنظيمها؟

الاتصال

- أخبرني عن العلاقات الإعلامية ؟
- خبرني عن خبراتك، وتحديدًا فيما يتعلق بالرقابة. هل تعتقد أن لقوانين الرقابة تأثير على وسائل الإعلام؟ كيف يؤثر ذلك؟
- ند كتابة مادة صحفية خاصة بك أو إنشاء حملة ، هل تكون على علم بالقيود الرقابية وما يجب مروه على "المقص الرقابي" ؟
- أي نوع من المعلومات التي قد يتم فلترتها من الرقابة عندما تريد أن تنشر بيان صحفي؟ هل هناك دستور أو قانون عن ما هو محظور كتابته في البيانات الصحفية الخاصة بك ؟ هل تطبق الرقابة الذاتية؟ ما هو رأيك في الرقابة الذاتية؟ كيف تؤثر الرقابة الذاتية عليك كممارس للعلاقات العامة؟

Public communication subject .23

24. Tell me about media relations?
25. Tell me about your experiences, specifically around censorship. Do you believe censorship laws affects media? How does it affect it?
26. When writing your press release or creating a campaign, are you aware of what you have to censor or are you aware of what it is going to be censored?

27. What type of information would it be censored when publishing a press release?
28. Are there any rules to what you should write or what you should not write in your press releases?
29. Do you practise self censorship? What is your opinion on self censorship? How does self censorship affect you as a PR practitioner?

30. Culture

31. How do you view Saudi Arabia compared to the rest of the world? What are Saudi Arabia's unique characteristics?
32. Have you ever had to deal with what you would regard as a sensitive subject with regard to Saudi culture? (such as subject related to sexuality, health, politics)
33. Have you ever had to deal with what you would regard as a sensitive subject with regard to Islamic culture? (such as the subject of the Danish cartoon against prophet Mohammed, when a Saudi newspaper published it).
34. Can you specify what you see as sensitive subject within (A) Saudi and (B) Islamic culture?
35. How might the sensitivity of such subjects affect communications work (A) within Saudi (B) between SA and other cultures?
36. How often have you used Islamic themes or references in your communications work and why?
37. How might Islamic values affect the work of communications practitioners? Please give examples that might help me to understand this.
38. What is the relationship between Karam and PR work?
39. What is the relationship between Wasta and PR?

الثقافة

تتنظر إلى المملكة العربية السعودية بالمقارنة مع بقية العالم؟ ما هي الخصائص والميزات الفريدة من نوعها في المملكة العربية السعودية؟ هل سبق لك التعامل مع ما يمكن ان يعتبر موضوع حساس بالنسبة الى الثقافة السعودية؟ (مثل موضوع يتعلق بالحياة الجنسية، والصحة، والسياسة). هل سبق لك التعامل مع ما يمكن ان يعتبر موضوع حساس بالنسبة إلى الثقافة الإسلامية؟ (مثل موضوع الرسوم الدنماركية، عندما نشرت في أحد الصحف السعودية). (السعودية) • هل يمكنك تحديد ما تراه موضوع حساس كما في الثقافة () و الإسلامية؟ B () يمكن أن تتسبب الحساسية لموضوع معين أن تؤثر على العمل الإعلامي أو الاتصالي: () في السعودية A () بين السعودية والثقافات الأخرى؟ B () عند العمل على حملة علاقات عامة أو مادة صحفية، هل تفكر في استخدام الموضوعات الاقتباسات أو المراجع الإسلامية؟ ولماذا؟ يمكن أن تؤثر القيم الإسلامية على عمل ممارسين الاتصال؟ يرجى إعطاء الأمثلة التي قد تساعدني على فهم هذا. • ما هي العلاقة بين فضيلة "الكرم" وعمل العلاقات العامة؟ • ما هي العلاقة بين المحسوبيات (الواسطة) وعمل العلاقات العامة؟

مهنيًا

• هل تعتبر أن عملك في العلاقات العامة هو وظيفة، أم مهنة؟ • هل سبق لك أن واجهت أو لاحظت معضلات أخلاقية عند ممارسة العلاقات العامة؟ هل تعتقد أن بالإمكان تصنيف ممارسة العلاقات العامة كمهنة أو وظيفة؟ وهل العلاقات العامة مرتبطة بمهنة أو وظيفة أخرى؟ هل تعتقد أنه لا يجب السماح للأفراد بالعمل في مجال العلاقات العامة إلا إذا كان تأهيلهم يشمل شهادة جامعية في العلاقات العامة؟

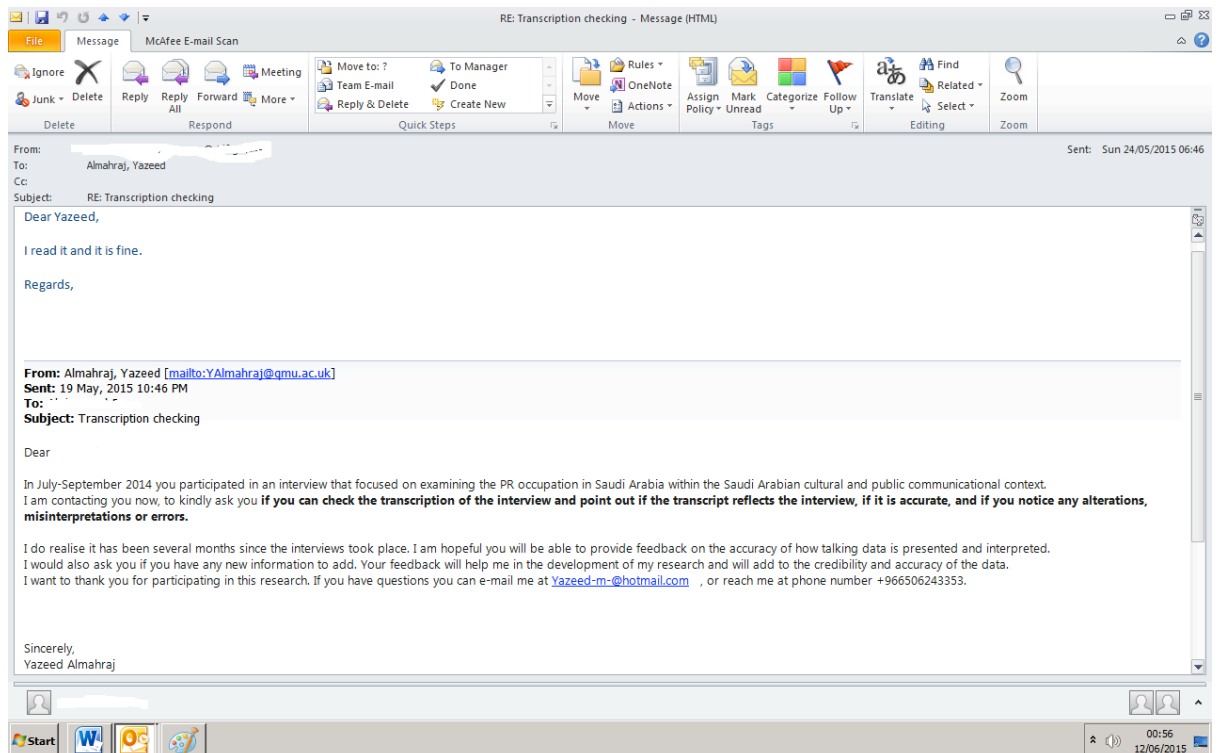
40. Profession

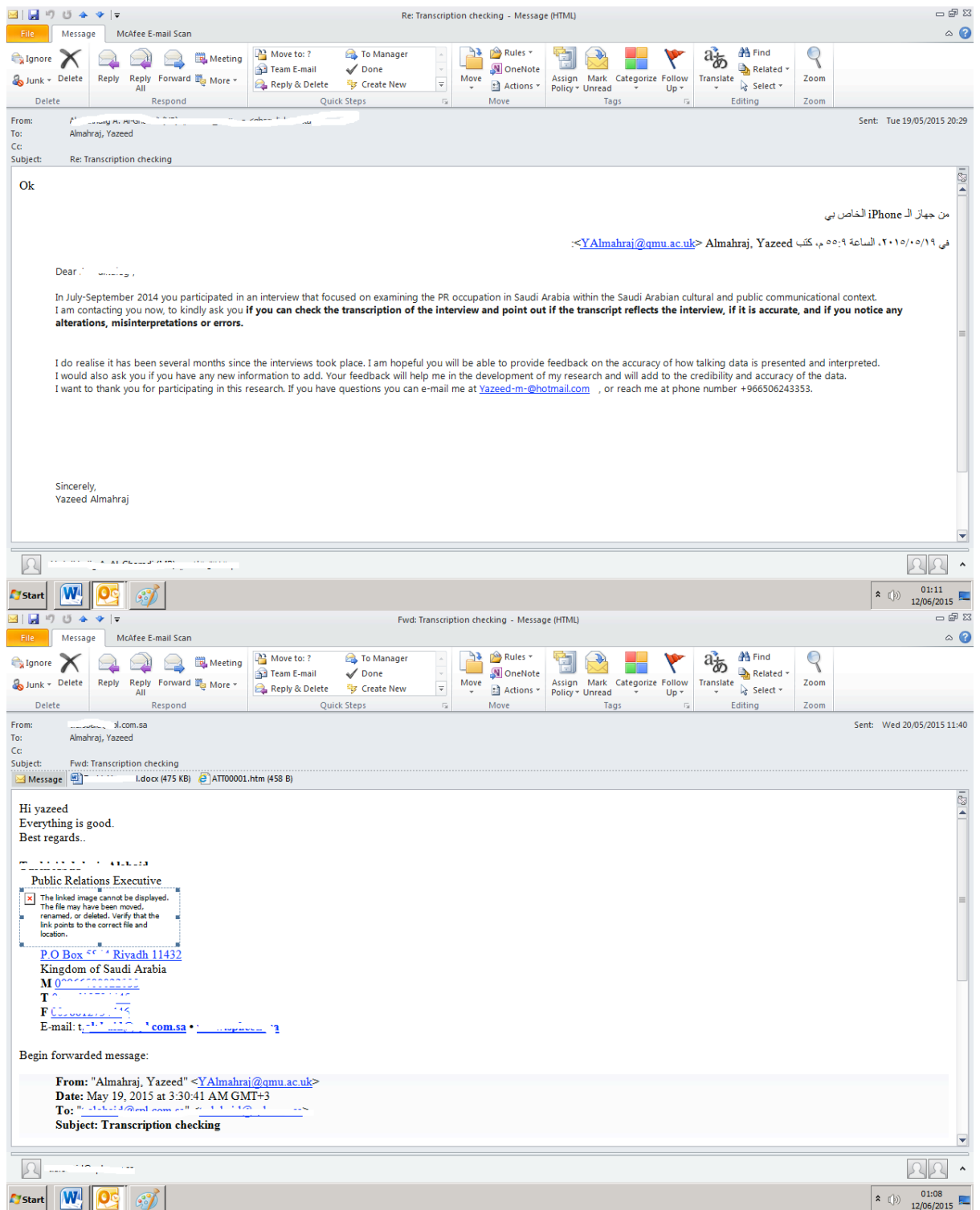
41. Do you consider your PR work a career or a job?
42. Have you ever encountered or observed what you would regard as ethical dilemmas in practice?
43. Do you think PR practice can be considered a profession or an occupation? What other occupations/professions is it related to?
44. Do you think people should be allowed to work in PR only if they graduated from a university PR programme?

Appendix 2

Member checking Emails

examples:





RE: Transcription checking - Message (HTML)

File Message McAfee E-mail Scan

Ignore X Reply Reply Forward Meeting
Junk Delete All Respond More
Delete

Move to: ? To Manager
Team E-mail Done
Reply & Delete Create New

Quick Steps


Rules OneNote
Assign Mark Categorize Follow
Policy Unread Tags Up
Actions

Find Related
Translate Select
Zoom

From: Dr.Abdurahman Al Abdulqader <aq@RCJY.GOV.SA>
To: Almahraj, Yazeed
Cc:
Subject: RE: Transcription checking
Sent: Wed 03/06/2015 13:29

Message Abdulrahman Alabdulgader.docx (483 KB)

dear Yazeed Almahraj
hope all well with you
you will find attached the answers for the questions
regards,


الهيئة الملكية للجبيل وينبع
Royal Commission for Jubail & Yanbu
د. عبدالرحمن بن عبدالعزيز الجعافرة
مدير عام الاتصال والتواصل
الهيئة الملكية للجبيل وينبع
aq@rcjy.gov.sa
00966112649050
00966114569126
11432 الرياض 5964
مملكة العربية السعودية
Dr.Abdurahman A. Al Abdulqader
Director of the General Administration of
Communication and Information
Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu
Email: aq@rcjy.gov.sa
Tele: 00966112649050
Fax: 00966114569126
P.O. Box 5964 Riyadh 11432
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

From: Almahraj, Yazeed [mailto:YAlmahraj@qmu.ac.uk]

Dr.Abdurahman Al Abdulqader

Re: Transcription checking - Message (HTML)

File Message McAfee E-mail Scan

Ignore X Reply Reply Forward Meeting
Junk Delete All Respond More
Delete

Move to: ? To Manager
Team E-mail Done
Reply & Delete Create New

Quick Steps

Rules OneNote
Assign Mark Categorize Follow
Policy Unread Tags Up
Actions

Find Related
Translate Select
Zoom

From: mfwad awwad <mfwad3@gmail.com>
To: Almahraj, Yazeed
Cc:
Subject: Re: Transcription checking
Sent: Mon 01/06/2015 14:51

it was checked it is alright

2015-05-21 9:21 GMT+03:00 mfwad awwad <mfwad3@gmail.com>:

السلام عليكم
هل يمكن إرسال نسخة بالعربي
أسهل وأكثر وضوحاً

2015-05-21 0:32 GMT+03:00 Almahraj, Yazeed <YAlmahraj@qmu.ac.uk>:

,Dear Mofoz

Saudi Arabian cultural and public communicational context In July-September 2014 you participated in an interview that focused on examining the PR occupation in Saudi Arabia within the
**you can check the transcription of the interview and point out if the transcript reflects the interview, if it is accurate, and if you notice any alterations, if I am contacting you now, to kindly ask you
.misinterpretations or errors**

.took place. I am hopeful you will be able to provide feedback on the accuracy of how talking data is presented and interpreted I do realise it has been several months since the interviews
.Your feedback will help me in the development of my research and will add to the credibility and accuracy of the data I would also ask you if you have any new information to add
.966506243353+ or reach me at phone number , Yazeed-m@hotmail.com you have questions you can e-mail me at I want to thank you for participating in this research. If

Sincerely
Yazeed Almahraj

mfwad awwad

Re: Transcription checking - Message (HTML)

File Message McAfee E-mail Scan

Ignore Delete Reply Reply All Forward More Meeting Move to: ? Team E-mail To Manager Done Create New Reply & Delete Quick Steps Move OneNote Assign Policy Mark Unread Categorize Follow Up Translate Find Related Select Zoom

From: Saud Algarbi <s Algarbi@gmail.com>
To: Almahraj, Yazeed
Cc:
Subject: Re: Transcription checking

Sent: Sun 24/05/2015 15:12

Dear Yazeed

I checked the interview and it's ok

Sincerely,

On ٢٠/٥/٢٠١٥, at ١١:٠٢, "Almahraj, Yazeed" <YAlmahraj@qmu.ac.uk> wrote:

Dear

In July-September 2014 you participated in an interview that focused on examining the PR occupation in Saudi Arabia within the Saudi Arabian cultural and public communicational context. I am contacting you now, to kindly ask you **if you can check the transcription of the interview and point out if the transcript reflects the interview, if it is accurate, and if you notice any alterations, misinterpretations or errors.**

I do realise it has been several months since the interviews took place. I am hopeful you will be able to provide feedback on the accuracy of how talking data is presented and interpreted. I would also ask you if you have any new information to add. Your feedback will help me in the development of my research and will add to the credibility and accuracy of the data. I want to thank you for participating in this research. If you have questions you can e-mail me at Yazeed-m@hotmail.com, or reach me at phone number +966506243353.

Re: Transcription checking - Message (HTML)

File Message McAfee E-mail Scan

Ignore Delete Reply Reply All Forward More Meeting Move to: ? Team E-mail To Manager Done Create New Reply & Delete Quick Steps Move OneNote Assign Policy Mark Unread Categorize Follow Up Translate Find Related Select Zoom

From: Almahraj, Yazeed
To: Almahraj, Yazeed
Cc:
Subject: Re: Transcription checking

Sent: Tue 19/05/2015 05:15

Perfect !
Only one thing you need to change .

Q4 : my major is English not Arabic .
I believe you have to change it to English .
I gained my solid Arabic skills from secondary school

Best luck Yazeed

On May 18, 2015, at 11:56 PM, Almahraj, Yazeed <YAlmahraj@qmu.ac.uk> wrote:

Dear

In July-September 2014 you participated in an interview that focused on examining the PR occupation in Saudi Arabia within the Saudi Arabian cultural and public communicational context. I am contacting you now, to kindly ask you **if you can check the transcription of the interview and point out if the transcript reflects the interview, if it is accurate, and if you notice any alterations, misinterpretations or errors.**

I do realise it has been several months since the interviews took place. I am hopeful you will be able to provide feedback on the accuracy of how talking data is presented and interpreted. I would also ask you if you have any new information to add. Your feedback will help me in the development of my research and will add to the credibility and accuracy of the data. I want to thank you for participating in this research. If you have questions you can e-mail me at Yazeed-m@hotmail.com, or reach me at phone number +966506243353.

Re: Transcription checking - Message (HTML)

File Message McAfee E-mail Scan

Ignore Delete Reply Reply All Forward More Meeting Move to: ? Team E-mail To Manager Done Create New Reply & Delete Quick Steps Move OneNote Assign Policy Mark Unread Categorize Follow Up Translate Find Related Select Zoom

From: Almahraj, Yazeed
To: Almahraj, Yazeed
Cc:
Subject: Re: Transcription checking

Sent: Tue 19/05/2015 05:15

Perfect !
Only one thing you need to change .

Q4 : my major is English not Arabic .
I believe you have to change it to English .
I gained my solid Arabic skills from secondary school

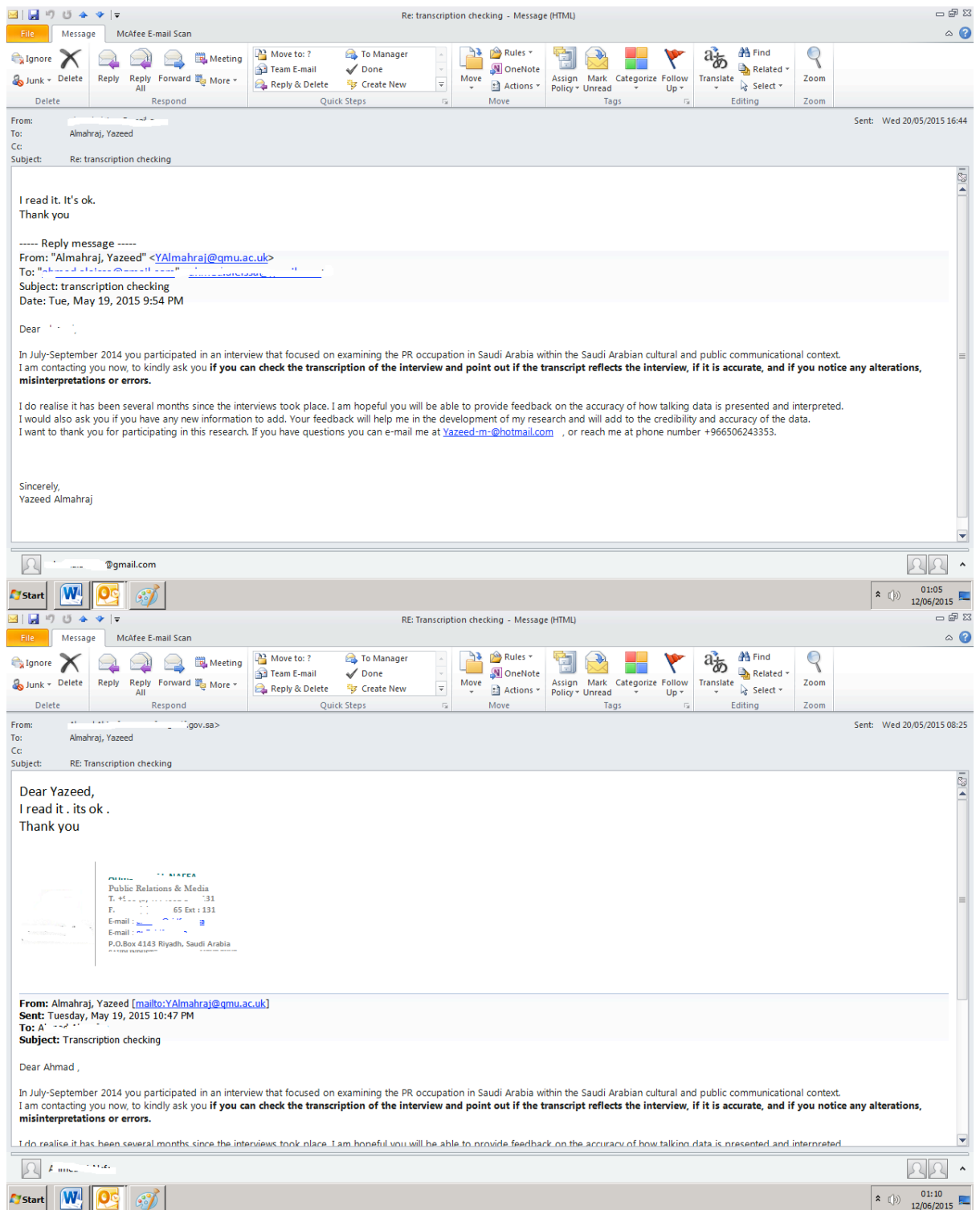
Best luck Yazeed

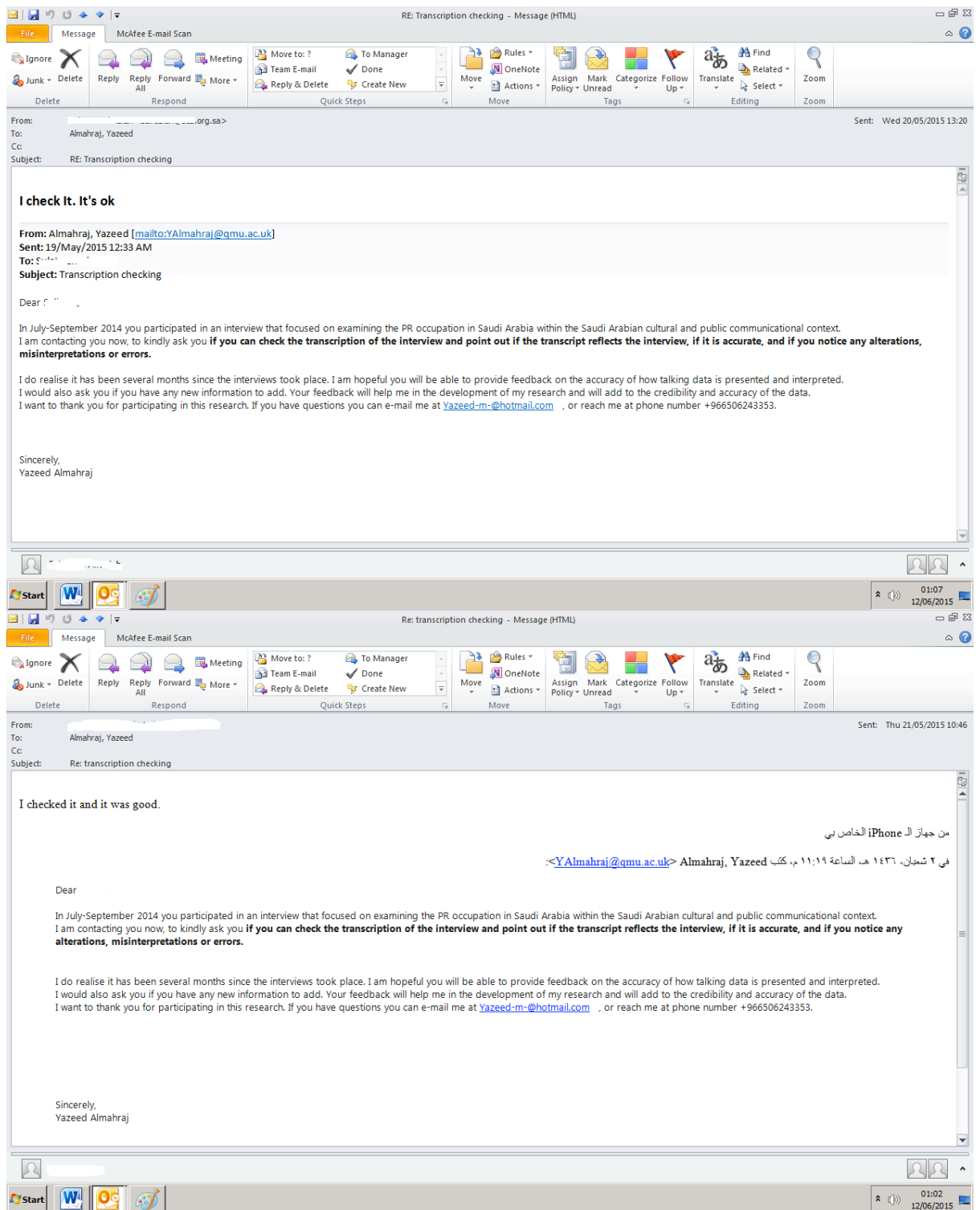
On May 18, 2015, at 11:56 PM, Almahraj, Yazeed <YAlmahraj@qmu.ac.uk> wrote:

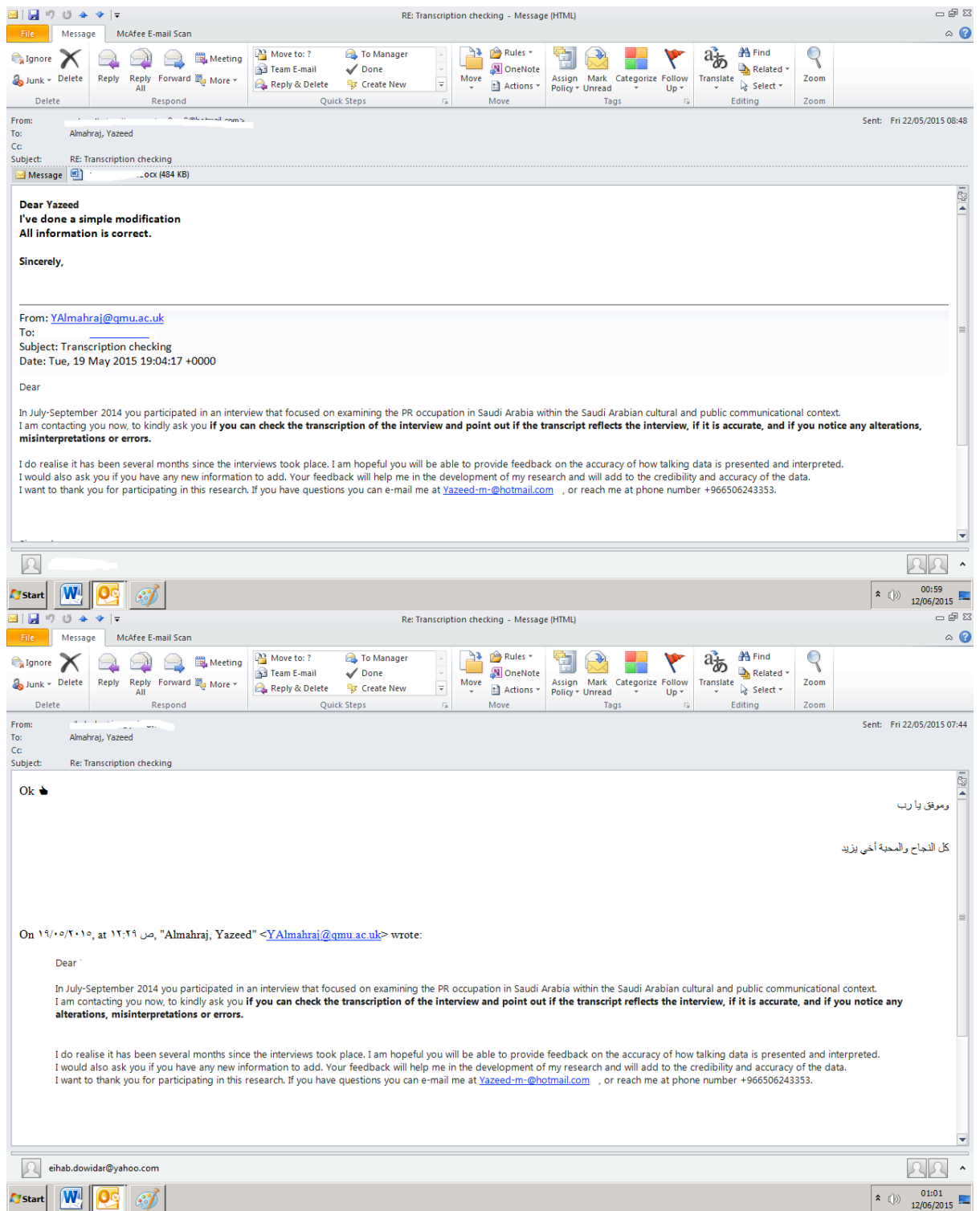
Dear

In July-September 2014 you participated in an interview that focused on examining the PR occupation in Saudi Arabia within the Saudi Arabian cultural and public communicational context. I am contacting you now, to kindly ask you **if you can check the transcription of the interview and point out if the transcript reflects the interview, if it is accurate, and if you notice any alterations, misinterpretations or errors.**

I do realise it has been several months since the interviews took place. I am hopeful you will be able to provide feedback on the accuracy of how talking data is presented and interpreted. I would also ask you if you have any new information to add. Your feedback will help me in the development of my research and will add to the credibility and accuracy of the data. I want to thank you for participating in this research. If you have questions you can e-mail me at Yazeed-m@hotmail.com, or reach me at phone number +966506243353.







Re: Transcription checking - Message (HTML)

File Message McAfee E-mail Scan

Ignore X Delete Reply Reply All Forward More Meeting Move to: ? To Manager Rules OneNote Assign Policy Mark Unread Categorize Follow Up Translate Find Related Select Zoom

Delete Respond Quick Steps Move Actions Tags Editing Zoom

From: [redacted]@il.com> Sent: Tue 19/05/2015 13:11
To: Almahraj, Yazeed
Cc:
Subject: Re: Transcription checking

It is fine. كتب: ٢٠١٥، مايو ١٩، Almahraj, Yazeed <YAlmahraj@qmu.ac.uk>

Dear [redacted],

In July-September 2014 you participated in an interview that focused on examining the PR occupation in Saudi Arabia within the Saudi Arabian cultural and public communicational context. I am contacting you now, to kindly ask you **if you can check the transcription of the interview and point out if the transcript reflects the interview, if it is accurate, and if you notice any alterations, misinterpretations or errors.**

I do realise it has been several months since the interviews took place. I am hopeful you will be able to provide feedback on the accuracy of how talking data is presented and interpreted. I would also ask you if you have any new information to add. Your feedback will help me in the development of my research and will add to the credibility and accuracy of the data. I want to thank you for participating in this research. If you have questions you can e-mail me at Yazeed-m@hotmail.com , or reach me at phone number +966506243353.

Sincerely,
Yazeed Almahraj

Fwd: Transcription checking - Message (HTML)

Start W O Start 01:12 12/06/2015

File Message McAfee E-mail Scan

Ignore X Delete Reply Reply All Forward More Meeting Move to: ? To Manager Rules OneNote Assign Policy Mark Unread Categorize Follow Up Translate Find Related Select Zoom

Delete Respond Quick Steps Move Actions Tags Editing Zoom

From: Zaid Alshakri <alshakri.zaid@gmail.com> Sent: Sun 31/05/2015 21:03
To: Almahraj, Yazeed
Cc:
Subject: Fwd: Transcription checking

Dear Yazeed,

Looks fine.

Thanks & good luck!

Zaid

On May 18, 2015, at 11:48 PM, Almahraj, Yazeed <YAlmahraj@qmu.ac.uk> wrote:

Dear Zaid,

In July-September 2014 you participated in an interview that focused on examining the PR occupation in Saudi Arabia within the Saudi Arabian cultural and public communicational context. I am contacting you now, to kindly ask you **if you can check the transcription of the interview and point out if the transcript reflects the interview, if it is accurate, and if you notice any alterations, misinterpretations or errors.**

I do realise it has been several months since the interviews took place. I am hopeful you will be able to provide feedback on the accuracy of how talking data is presented and interpreted. I would also ask you if you have any new information to add. Your feedback will help me in the development of my research and will add to the credibility and accuracy of the data. I want to thank you for participating in this research. If you have questions you can e-mail me at Yazeed-m@hotmail.com , or reach me at phone number +966506243353.

Zaid Alshakri

Start W O Start 00:52 12/06/2015

Appendix 3

Codes list:

Knowledge theme	Culture theme			Public communication theme
knowledge gained from various academic disciplines	Saudi Arabian exceptionalism			Censorship
journalism	conservatism	privacy and boundaries		Self-censorship as a positive guide in communication work
tacit PR knowledge and hands-on knowledge	customs and traditions			Media relations
institutionalising PR profession	Karam	Family& tribe	Wasta influence on the PR employment	Journalists
public relations qualifications	Negative Wasta		Positive Wasta	
public relations associations	Islamic culture			
public relations trainings	Language and Religion			

Appendix 4

Information sheet:



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

Information Sheet نموذج المعلومات

مهنية الاتصال في المملكة العربية السعودية: حالة العلاقات العامة.

Professionalising Communication in Saudi Arabia: The Case of Public Relations.

My name is Yazeed Almahraj and I am a PhD student from the School of Arts and social sciences at Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh. As part of my degree course, I am undertaking a research project for my thesis. The title of my project is: Professionalising Communication in Saudi Arabia: The Case of Public Relations.

بن عبدالله المحرج طالب دكتوراه من كلية اسمي يزيد الفنون والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة الملكة مارغريت في أدنبرة. كجزء من برنامجي الدراسي، أنا أعمل الآن مدينة على مشروع بحثي، خاص برسائلي لدرجة الدكتوراه. عنوان الرسالة هو : مهنية الاتصال في المملكة العربية السعودية: حالة العلاقات العامة .

This study searches to examine PR occupation in Saudi Arabia within the Saudi Arabian cultural and public communicational context. Its goal is to examine the body of knowledge and the practice of PR officers in this particular cultural framework. The findings of the project will be valuable because it will fill the gap in the literature regarding PR as an occupational activity in Saudi Arabia within the cultural and public communicational context.

تبحث هذه الدراسة في اختبار وظيفة العلاقات العامة في المملكة العربية السعودية من خلال الثقافة السعودية وفي سياق الاتصال. هدفها: هو دراسة حجم معرفة و ممارسة مسؤولي العلاقات العامة لمهامهم في إطار هذه الثقافة تحديداً.

نتائج هذا المشروع من شأنها أن تكون ذات قيمة لأنها

I am looking for volunteers to participate in the project. There are no criteria of gender, age or health for being included or excluded, however I am looking exclusively for Saudi Arabian PR practitioners that work in the PR field in Saudi Arabia.

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview that will include questions related to the subject above. The researcher is not aware of any risks associated with this research. The whole procedure should take no longer than one hour. You will be free to withdraw from the study at any stage and you would not have to give a reason.

All data will be anonymised as much as possible, but you may be identifiable from tape recordings of your voice. Your name will be replaced with a participant number, and it will not be possible for you to be identified in any reporting of the data gathered.

The results will be published in my PhD thesis "Professionalising Communication in Saudi Arabia: The case of Public Relations" and may be published in a journal or presented at a conference.

If you would like to contact an independent person, who knows about this project but is not involved in it, you are welcome to contact Mariola Tarrega. Her contact details are given below.

If you have read and understood this information sheet, any questions you had have been answered, and you would like to be a participant in the study, please now see the consent form.

Contact details of the researcher:

Name of researcher:
Yazeed Almahraj

Address:

Media, communication and performing art, Arts and social sciences.

Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh

Telephone / Email:+966506243353 / Yalmahraj@qmu.ac.uk

سوف تملأ الفجوة في الدراسات السابقة بخصوص العلاقات العامة كنشاط وظيفي في المملكة العربية السعودية وذلك من خلال السياق الإتصالي والثقافي.

أبحث عن متطوعين للمشاركة في المشروع. علماً أنه لا توجد معايير عمرية، صحية أو نوعية محددة ليتم التضمين أو الاستبعاد من المشاركة. إلا أن هذه الدراسة وبشكل حصري، تستهدف السعوديين العاملين و الممارسين للعلاقات العامة في المملكة العربية السعودية.

إذا كنت توافق على المشاركة في الدراسة، سوف أتشرف بلقاءك ونتجاذب أطراف الحديث عن الموضوع أعلاه. الباحث ليس على علم بأي مخاطر قد ترتبط بهذا البحث. الإجراء بأكمله لن يستغرق أكثر من ساعة واحدة. لك الحق و كامل الحرية في الانسحاب من الدراسة في أي مرحلة، دون الحاجة لتوضيح الأسباب.

جميع البيانات والمعلومات ستعتمد السرية قدر الإمكان. علماً أن التعرف على الصوت، من خلال التسجيلات المصاحبة للقاء، قد يكون ممكناً. سيتم استبدال الأسماء بأرقام رمزية، و لن يكون من الممكن الربط بين المشاركين و التقارير أو البيانات التي تم جمعها.

سيتم استخدام ونشر النتائج ضمن رسالة الدكتوراه الخاصة بي، "مهنية الاتصال في المملكة العربية السعودية: حالة العلاقات العامة"، مع وجود احتمال لنشرها في مجلة متخصصة أو تقديمها ضمن مؤتمر.

إذا كنت ترغب في الاتصال بشخص منفصل، لديه معرفة بهذا المشروع و ليس مشاركاً فيه، فمن المرحب بك الاتصال بـ ماريولا تاريجا. أدناه، التفاصيل المتعلقة بطرق الاتصال بها.

إذا كنت قد قرأت وفهمت المعلومات الموجودة في هذا النموذج، ثم كنت ترغب في أن تكون أحد المشاركين في الدراسة، يرجى الاطلاع على نموذج الموافقة الذي سوف يتم تسليمه لك خلال اللقاء. وسائل التواصل بالباحث:

Name of adviser:
Mariola Tarrega

Address:


Media, communication and performing art, Arts and social sciences.

Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh

Email / Telephone:Mtarrega@qmu.ac.uk / 0131 474 0000

Appendix 5

Consent form:



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

Consent Form

نموذج الموافقة

"مهنية الاتصال في المملكة العربية السعودية: حالة العلاقات العامة"

"Professionalising Communication in Saudi Arabia: The Case of Public"

<p>I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.</p> <p>I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study.</p> <p>I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage without giving any reason.</p> <p>I agree to participate in this study.</p>	<p>لقد قرأت وفهمت نموذج المعلومات و نموذج الموافقة المرفق. وقد أتيت في الفرصة لطرح الأسئلة المتعلقة بمشاركتي.</p> <p>أنا أفهم أنني لست ملزماً بالمشاركة في هذه تدراسة.</p> <p>أنا أفهم أن لدي الحق في الانسحاب من هذه تدراسة في أي مرحلة دون إبداء أي سبب.</p> <p>بالتالي، أنا أوافق على المشاركة في هذه تدراسة.</p>
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<p>Name of participant:</p> <p>Signature of participant:</p> <p>Signature of researcher:</p> <p>Date:</p>	<p>اسم المشارك:</p> <p>توقيع المشارك:</p> <p>توقيع الباحث:</p> <p>التاريخ:</p>
---	--

Contact details of the researcher تفاصيل الاتصال بالباحث:

Name of researcher: Yazeed Almahraj

Address:
PhD Student, Media, communication and performing art, Arts and social sciences.
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh
Email/ Telephone: +966506243353 / Yalmahraj@qmu.ac.uk

Appendix 6

Arabic Public Relations Associations:

1. The Arab Public relations society. (1965) Cairo
2. Emirates Public Relations Association. (2002) Abu Dhabi
3. Saudi Advertising and Public Relations Association. (2011) Riyadh
4. Kuwait Public Relations Association. (2007) Kuwait
5. Bahrain Public Relations Association. (2006) Manama
6. Syrian Public Relations Association. (2004) Damascus
7. Palestinian Public Relations Association. (2004) Gaza
8. Iraqi Public Relations Association. (2013) Bagdad
9. The Middle East Public Relations Association. (2001) Abu Dhabi

Appendix 7

Quotes examples of knowledge gained from various academic disciplines theme

Knowledge gained from various academic disciplines	P 20: “I do not think the certificate is important to work in the PR field because if you have an English or psychology degree or even only high school it will be enough to work in the PR field. I believe the degree in PR is going to add to you only ten percent but the practice of PR will make you a real PR practitioner.”	P 9: “It is important for a Saudi PR officer to know English language because the PR knowledge is created and produced in the western world so when you want to read about the most updated information about PR you will find it in English” “I think my bachelor degree in Arabic language helped me in my career in PR and journalism. I think the Arabic language helped me in editing the news in the best way. For example the discourse analysis module helped me now in my PR job for example when I write my message I have the writing skills such as using influencing writing by using some style to influence the readers.”	
	P 14: “The Arabic language helped me to form the message in a focused and clear way. Specialists in English literature and Arab literature are the best PR practitioners.”	P 2: “In the university I did sociology and this is a human subject and PR is also a human subject. In sociology they taught us how to make a strong relationship with others and in PR that is what you need, to have a good relationship with the public.”	P 8: “I believe my degree in computer science helped me to be advanced when I use the social media platforms for my PR work.”

Appendix 8

Quotes examples of journalism theme

Journalism	P 23: "I entered PR because my work is close to PR which is journalism. Thus journalism and PR are completing each other so I worked the past years as a PR consultant because I have a good journalism background."	P 26: "I entered PR because there is a strong link between PR and journalism which is my other hobby. Another reason made me work in PR and journalism is because 14 years ago there was a lack of available government jobs."
	<p>P 8: "I started my work life as a journalist and a couple of years ago I entered PR because there is a strong link between Journalism and PR. I believe my strong skills as a journalist made me a successful PR officer."</p> <p>"I believe the PR officer that does not have a journalism background tends to write in a stupid way so the readers will not react at the news. As PR officer you need to adopt the policy of each newspaper to avoid cutting from your news. For me personally, when I send news to the newspaper, it always gets published in the same condition and the main reason for not cutting my text is because I understand what journalists want from me"</p>	

Appendix 9

Quotes examples of hands-on public relations knowledge theme

Hands-on Public Relations Knowledge	P 2: “I’m not fan of attending courses. I prefer the conference because I will meet many PR officers from different countries and I will gain the real benefit from hearing successful PR experience.”	P 6: “Yes I’m interested in training courses but not any course because some courses is not going to prove to me any benefit because the trainer is not experienced to tell us about PR. Sometimes I feel I know more than the trainer. Thus I choose the best trainer to gain new experiences. I remember the best training course that I gain a lot of new information from was the trainer the organiser of the League of Arab states and he told us about his experiences when he organised the meeting for the Arabic leaders for the Gulf War in the 1990. Thus through this trainer you will learn practical information not a theoretical information from the 1930 which will not help me nowadays in the new era of the internet.”
	P18: I’m member at the Saudi PR association and the reason to be member is to make a relationship with the expert PR officers and to learn from their experience.	P 20: “I like to attend a conference to learn from other people experience. I do not think the certificate is important to work in the PR field because if you have an English or psychology degree or even only high school it will be enough to work in the PR field. I believe the degree in PR is going to add to you only ten percent but the practice of PR will make you a real PR practitioner.”
	P 27: “the person that has a good experience in PR and also has all the PR skills should work in PR. Many PR graduates are not as good as some of the one with different education degrees. I believe it is important for the person to be qualified academic and practically. I think it is not fair to teach him theories and to shock him when he starts his practice so I believe PR is not a certificate to gain but PR is a practice to learn.”	P 10: “The training will bring to me benefits if the course is held by an experienced PR officer or trainer.”

Appendix 10

Quotes examples of public relations qualification theme

Public Relations Qualifications	P 8: "I'm with the person to be qualified in the same field where he is working but not only through university degree. I think you can be qualified in PR through PR courses and gaining PR experience. Some people are not qualified but they are talented in PR. I think it is very important to have the PR instincts to be good and successful in PR. Some people have the PR degree but they do not have the PR instinct."	P 11: "If a person has different background from PR but has the sense of journalism and sense of writing, in this case, he is qualified to work in a PR department, however he needs to train in PR, to know basic things and I think that is fine."
	P 13: "I don't believe they should close the career on only the individuals qualified in PR because there are people that have the charisma of PR so people like this person and feel comfortable with him so he can send the message easily and smoothly, more than the qualified one. For example, we received an interviewee to work as a PR in our department and the guy was very shy so how can he work as a PR officer if he is very shy and even if he was qualified. The certificate in PR is important but without the charisma and the personal quality of PR I believe the certificate will not help the person."	P 6: "I don't think is necessary to have a PR education background because some of the PR work does not need someone to have a degree in PR , because anyone can do this kind of duties or protocol duty unqualified person can do it."
	P 20: "I do not think the certificate is important to work in the PR field because if you have an English or psychology degree or even only high school it will be enough to work in the PR field."	P 25: "I do not think so but it can be measured by making a PR career exam like the lawyers in USA they need to do an exam to measure their knowledge. So if a person reads a lot about PR and media and has the skills of PR and take courses in PR he can practice PR without needing a degree in PR. I prefer for the person to get a degree in PR but if he does not have the degree this will not ban the person from working in PR if he has the PR knowledge and skills through self learning."

Appendix 11

Quotes examples of public relations associations

Public Relations Associations	P 2: “I was a member two years ago and now I am not a member anymore because I tried when I registered with them to support the association and also because I thought I will gain some benefits but unfortunately I did not gain any knowledge or benefits or any invitation for any activities that were organised and I wanted the association to help me as a PR practitioner and protect my career as a PR practitioner but what I found out that the reality is that the board members are volunteering and are not interested in this association.”		P 6: “The Saudi PR association is not active and not updating their website and not going to improve my skills so I did not bother myself to register with them.”
	P 4: “Yes, I am member of the British PR association and the Saudi PR association but the Saudi association is not that active. For example, if they have any activities, they never email me so I see their news in the newspaper and I am disappointed because I am a member but they did not take care of me and did not pay attention to their members.”	P 10: “I’m not a member of PR association In Saudi because there is not PR association in Saudi.”	P 14: “The Saudi PR association has a lot of issues. For example, they did not promote their activities between the PR officers in Saudi. Another issue is that they do not offer PR officers anything.”
	P 11: “This membership is only prestige for the members and founders of this association. This is just to show off; there is nothing to bring any benefits to the field of PR or communication.		P 12: “Well, I registered at the Saudi PR and advertising association and I just registered and after that I did not

	<p>This association just helps the main people in the association for their own good and does not bring benefits to the profession. The membership is going to help the person only to get some extra job or to consult him for different needs. The Association is not developing the field of PR in Saudi Arabia. There is nothing to mention about practitioner courses or workshops. Even the conferences are not organised by them but by other associations.”</p>	<p>hear anything about this association. They did not contact me for any courses or anything so it was useless to register for anything.”</p>
	<p>P 20: “In Saudi I'm not willing to be a member of useless PR association because they are interested on the fees only and also the people that run this association are not a real PR practitioners from the field to be aware about their issues. The academics that run this PR association are not experienced so how can they help the practitioners to survive in the field.”</p>	<p>P 21: “I am not a member of a PR association because I feel it will not help me and develop my PR skills. I believe this association is only for showing off and prestige reasons. I don't believe this Saudi PR association will continue because there is no support for this association and there is no clear budget for it.”</p> <p>P 8: “Me and my PR team are like an association but we cannot be an official PR association because we need to be under academic umbrella. For me I do not want to go to one of the universities to give the PR team the official and legal team because they will control our vision and activities. Thus we cannot make our PR team to become a syndicate because we need to be under the umbrella of the government.”</p>
	<p>P 4: “I registered with the PR team. This PR team started from 3 PR officers in a coffee shop and they believed they need to expand more and to ask new PR officers to take part in this team meeting. These three founders of the PR team are not having any PR education background. One has an English bachelor degree and another one has a computer science degree and the third is specialised in media, but all of them are working in the PR department. On these these meetings we discuss the issues and how we can solve them. So we are exchanging experience.”</p>	

Appendix 12

Quotes examples of Public relations training theme

Public Relations Training	<p>P 6: “I am interested in training courses but not any course because some courses are not going to bring me any benefits because the trainer is not experienced to tell us about PR. Sometimes I feel I know more than the trainer. Thus, I choose the best trainer to gain new experiences. I remember the best training course that I gain a lot of new information from was the trainer the organiser of the League of Arab states and he told us about his experiences when he organised the meeting for the Arabic leaders for the Gulf War In the 1990. Thus, through this trainer you will learn practical information not a theoretical information from the 1930 which will not help me nowadays in the new era of the internet.”</p>		
	<p>P 4: “I am interested in taking more courses in PR. For example I'm interested in taking courses in organising PR campaigns through social media and I believe the course will help me to develop my PR skills.”</p>	<p>P 13: “I am interested in taking more courses in PR and today I just finished a course in protocol. I believe it's hard for me to take courses in all the PR activities. I need to be specialist in one PR activity. I believe PR courses will develop my PR skills and career.”</p>	<p>P 11: “Once a year I go for a training course. The courses are helping me in my professional life. PR is this kind of knowledge that develops all the time and you need to update your knowledge all the time. there are new practices and new cases and you have to be aware about these.”</p>
	<p>P 12: “Training helped me and developed my skills in my career. For example, I took a course a modern course that can help me for my PR work which is the info graphic. People nowadays are fed up from long paragraphs and the traditional way of presenting the information. but when</p>		<p>P 17: I believe the training course is part of development circle for the PR and after when somebody finishes his degree in PR and would not be interested in taking</p>

	<p>you merge the picture with the short information, this will attract the readers more and especially when you support it with numbers, this will stick in their minds more than the long paragraph. And also the public receives so much information so they would not read a long information because there is a huge amount of information so they are attracted to the kind of information that has a few number of pictures and numbers because that is easier for the brain.”</p>	<p>PR courses, his knowledge about PR will not be updated, so I believe the courses are keeping the PR practitioners updated.</p>
	<p>P 14: “I am interested in taking courses and next week I will attend a PR course. I believe the courses help me develop my PR work because the method or the philosophy of courses is to listen to other people's experience and also to talk about your experience and you all PR professionals and the trainers evaluating your work. For example some American training center, when they want to promote for a course, they don't use the name of the trainer but they use the names of the attendees and to mention from which company they come from and this will make other people to look forward to go to this course only to met this experienced people.”</p>	

Appendix 13

Quotes examples of Conservatism theme

Conservatism	P 18: “Saudi Arabia has many different conservative cultures and the last five years started to be the society open when King Abdullah opened the abroad program education to big number of the Saudi students. Basically, Saudi society is still conservative and have strong relation to the religion.”	P 26: “Saudi Arabia is a different country from the rest of the world, we have similar habits to the Arab Gulf states and Saudi Arabia has a unique thing which is the two holly places to Mecca and Medina. Society in Saudi Arabia is ruled by the Sharia law and also the tradition and customs and society has 85 percent of the Arabic pure tribes. Each tribe has their customs and traditions. The tribes in Saudi Arabia are considered similar to political parties in the Western world. For example there are things in Saudi society that are forbidden not because of religion but because of religion and customs such as the woman driving or showing her face.”	
	P 2: “The existence of the two holly places made the world view us in a respectful way and a special country.”	P 7: “I think Saudi society has a unique characteristic. For example being a conservative and religious society, this is one of the unique characteristics and also keeping the customs and Saudi traditions and protect it from disappearing.”	
	P 14: “I think Saudi Arabia is unique with the existence of the two holly places and this makes Saudi society to be conservative and religious and also the Saudi government is connected strongly with the Islamic		

	<p>religion and rule because when the Saudi government started they started on the religious base and the Islamic rule was their rule so this is why Saudi Arabia is unique from other countries even from the neighbors.”</p>	
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Appendix 14

Quotes examples of privacy and boundaries theme

<p>Privacy and Boundaries</p>	<p>P 2: “One of the sensitive subjects is when we receive an international female guest and we need to explain to her the privacy of Saudi culture and the need to of covering with modesty. Because if we don’t do this action our target audience which is the r s population, will be against our association because they will think we don’t support morality so in this case they will not trust us.”</p>	<p>P 26: “If we have a conference we wouldn't mix the agenda and we will not put a man and a woman next to each other. We need to put a section for men and a section for women.”</p>	<p>P 22: “In the news sometimes we do not show some female pictures because we might be attacked by the society so we need to publish the news without photos because in Islam the women need to cover their hair and be modest with clothes so we will publish only pictures of women that wear at least a Hijab, even if the picture was taken outside of Saudi Arabia or even pictures showing western women.”</p>
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Appendix 15

Quotes examples of customs and traditions theme

Customs and Traditions	P 3: “Some people are doing certain things not because they believe in it but just to follow their tradition and customs, to no ruin their family reputation and his reputation.”	P 4: “Saudi is compared to the Arab Gulf countries. It is still disciplined in Islamic practices so I can say we are not extremist but we are in the middle and we are practicing the correct way of Islam. And I would like to mention that Saudi was not colonised by any country so we still have the Saudi customs and traditions. Also if you look at the Saudi society you will see the there are unique characteristics. For example, we have this value which is the fact that the old have mercy on the young and the young respect the older and also the strong family relations. Also in the work field, the older have respect for the young even when the older person is not right . For example today one of the old managers asked one of my younger employees a question and the answer back was without respect and dry so the old manager answered back with anger and my employee came to me and told me what happened. I told my employee this is against our culture and tradition to answer the old without respect.”	
	P 27: “Saudi has certain unique characteristics, such as being a religious society so the relation between the individual and the family will be strong because the religion asks Muslims to have this strong relationship.”	P 5: “I remember in one of the international conference we organised, the hotel did not put partition between the men and women audiences and we had complaints from the Saudi females because they cannot be comfortable with drinking and eating so we have to deal with this matter we talk to the management of the hotel to solve this issue and we succeeded to put partition.”	
	P 6: “Traditions and customs are important. As Saudis we are very linked to our family and relatives.”	P 10: “Saudi society is strongly connected to the Islam religion and custom and traditions.”	

Appendix 16

Quotes examples of family and tribe category

Family	<p>P 14: “I believe family relations in Saudi Arabia are really unique compared to other countries. For example, in the third conference of the education technology I was responsible about the PR committee and we called all the foreign participants to advise them from clothes to the weather. We don't only rely on emails. And also we tell them about the hotel and about the program. Three of them were from America and they asked us to not book hotel for them because they will stay at one of their friends' house in Saudi Arabia. When I met them in the conference I talked to them about their opinion about their stay at the Saudi family. They were impressed at the strength of the relationship between the family individuals.”</p>		<p>P5: “The family is one of the important element in the Saudi society so we do have here a strong relation between the family and the individual.”</p>
	<p>P17: “we have a unique relationship and the person would stay with his family even until 21 and you can't compared it with other countries because the individual is part of the family and has a strong relationship and not the financial situation will separate him from his family and there is some Islamic value that encourage us to have a strong relation with the family.”</p>	<p>P21: “I believe the Saudi society is famous for being generous and also the relationship between the family is very strong.”</p>	<p>P25: “We have a loyalty from the Saudi individuals to their families so this quality affects the individual decision the person will put on the family and the tribe as a priority.”</p>
Tribe	<p>P 9: “The tribe in Saudi Arabia does not have a strong influence on people</p>	<p>P 26: “Society in Saudi Arabia is ruled by the Sharia law and also the tradition and</p>	<p>P 8: “When they have an available position in PR department they</p>

	like before but now the tribe is only an administrative reference.”	customs and society has 85 percent of the Arabic pure tribes. Each tribe has their customs and traditions. The tribes in Saudi Arabia are considered similar to political parties in the Western world. For example there are things in Saudi society that are forbidden not because of religion but because of customs such as the woman driving or showing her face.”	accept anyone even if he is not qualified as PR officer. I believe the tribe has a strong influence in using wasta.”
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Appendix 17

Quotes examples of Karam category

Karam	P 12: “I believe if the high management in the organisation are well educated about PR they would give PR departments open budget. In this case I would say there is a strong relation between PR and karam because the PR department would treat the guest of the organisation in the best way and buy the best gift for the visitors and in the end when we treat our visitors and organisation guests with generosity they will go back to their countries and will talk good things about the organisation and Saudi Arabia so I believe Karam will bring benefits to the organisation through polishing the image of the organisation. But if the high management are not aware about the role of PR I would say there is no relation between PR and karam.”	P 9: “There is a relation between Karam and PR and we show this value when we receive international visitors. Even the logo of the official flag of Saudi Arabia is a date tree which is a symbol of generosity. But to use it inside my society is not worth it. I think to be professional is much better than to be generous.”	P 14: “Karam is the soul of the work of PR in Saudi Arabia. For example, when you organise an event and you will receive foreign guests I think the Karam value will be a great identity to show the foreign guests. Thus the Karam will be clear when you give an expensive gifts and big dinner party. I think Karam is one of the most important PR tool in Saudi because this value make the reputation of organisation is very good and this is the core of the PR work. For example, the famous none Muslim Arabic man who was famous of being generous so people until now love him because of this great value.”
	P 19: “We do use	P 6: “Generosity	P 15: “I believe

	<p>Karam value in our PR work. The use of Karam will depend on the guest if the guest is important we will take care of him and accompany him all the time.”</p>	<p>depends on the person if the person is important for us we will increase the level of Karam but if the person is not important we will do the standard of Karam only to not be criticised by him and to keep our image good in front of everyone.”</p>	<p>Karam should be part of the tool of the PR officer because using this Saudi value will help the PR officer to polish the image of the organisation and also it will make people like PR officers.”</p>
	<p>P 3: “Karam is important in the work of PR for example if you give an important gift to the journalists such as an iPad you will make him reliable. I guess there is a strong link between karam and the work of PR.”</p>	<p>P 18: “The value of karam is one of the keys to successful PR. For example when I will go to other organisation and I met the PR officer and he invites me in a dinner party and he will offer me tea and coffee after that when he needs to do something in my organisation, he doesn't need to come to the organisation to finish all his work, he can only call me and I will do everything for him without him bothering himself and coming to the organisation so the reason for me to do that for him is because he used the value of karam when he invited me and showed me some respect and appreciation.”</p>	

Appendix 18

Quotes examples of Wasta category

Wasta influence on the PR employment			
Negative Wasta	<p>P 1: “I think wasta can be involved in employing unqualified people at PR departments because the high management believes PR does not need qualification and with time they will understand the work of PR.”</p>	<p>P 2: I believe PR suffered from Wasta in employing unqualified people and I think the main reason for that is because PR is a theoretical field so it is normal to have this kind of breakthrough.</p>	<p>P 21: “I believe employing people at a PR department without having qualification is one of the element that build the bad reputation about PR in Saudi Arabia because the high management does not view PR as an important department, when some of the high management relatives wants to work, he will send him to a PR department because this guy who comes through wasta, does not have a qualification to help him to work in other department.</p>
	<p>P 12: “Wasta destroys the work of PR. For example when we put the priority for the manager to polish the image of the president of the association instead of publishing warning about certain products. In this case the wasta is destroying our work.</p>	<p>P 26: “Some people said if you have a big number of connections or wasta you will be a good PR officer, but for me I don't see it as a good relation with them. PR is victim to wasta because usually the high management when they have some of their relatives or friends they will employ them at the PR department because the high management believes they will learn with the time and they will be fine but in fact when we receive a new employee and we find out he is not qualified in PR and does not have a relation to PR, we get disappointed because we need qualified PR</p>	

	How is wasta involved in this situation? When the manager of one of the departments called the PR manager and ask him to publish his news and he is looking forward to see it in the newspaper so the manager of the PR will not publish the warning news which are most important but the manager's news.”	practitioners and this is one of the reasons why PR is not developed.”	
Positive Wasta	P 1: “I think because one of the important skills for a PR officer is to have good communication skills this might make others like or accept PR officers so when the PR officer asks them any favours they would do it without any hesitation.”	P 2: “Wasta is everywhere in Saudi. Wasta is one of the PR officer strengths. For example, when the PR officer is late in sending the news to the newspaper if he has a Wasta he could publish his news even if he was late.”	P 4: “I guess there is a big relation between Wasta and PR for example if you are sociable and friendly and you do not have any certificate they will send you to the PR department and this after Wasta. For example, I know three sport columnist that are managers of PR departments only because they know how to talk to people and have a good charisma.”
	P 6: “PR uses Wasta all the time. For example if we want to book a hall for our conference because I have a Wasta in the hotel they will give as gift three rooms for the day of the conference for free.”	P12: “Sometimes the wasta is helping the PR manager when he wants to publish important news before they will print the newspaper, he will call the chief editor and ask him kindly if they can help him because it is important and because of the strong relation between them, he would make	P13: “Wasta is everywhere and we practice wasta when some organisation wants us to help them we do it for them not because we are planning to get the favour back but we plan to make good relations with everyone and even the religious people when they want wasta from

		an exception for him and publish his news.”	somewhere they don't call it wasta, they call it from the religious way which is Shafaa. Wasta will be acceptable if it will not affect anyone, but when it affects anyone this is a bad wasta.”
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Appendix 19

Quotes examples of Censorship category

Censorship	<p>P 14: “Censorship in Saudi Arabia is very weak. I view it from the perspective of PR officers and journalists that's why I said it's a weak censorship. For example, there is an official rule that organised the relationship between the government institutions and the newspapers. One of the rules is when the government institutions send any news to the newspaper, they have to change the style of writing and to change any part of the news. If the newspaper will frame the news in a way that will mislead the readers, I as a government institution will be able to sue the newspaper. But the reality is that in Saudi Arabia you can't do anything and the ministry of information and media that created the rule of censorship do not practice it.</p> <p>For example one of the telecom companies in Saudi Arabia started a new way of writing news about their products and this news is a kind of advertisement and they pay the journalist for this kind of news and this internationally is a forbidden practice. For this kind of commercial product, it should appear in the newspaper as an advertisement not as news. The reason for forbidding this kind of practice is that the reader has a different kind of view about the advertisement and news. In this way you trick the reader, you show your advertisement as news, not as an advertisement. This is misleading for the readers. If the censorship in Saudi Arabia is really practiced this kind of practice would not appear in Saudi newspaper.”</p>		<p>P 1: “The censorship is important to organise the work and normally your freedom will stop when you cross to touch other people’s freedom. The censorship on the media changed. The theory of the gatekeeper was destroyed by the appearance of social media and electronic newspaper. Everything became available for everyone. But I believe censorship should exist but this censorship shouldn't be against the public benefit.”</p>
	<p>P 9: “I do not think there is any censorship on the published media content. I believe the</p>	<p>P 4: “Censorship in Saudi Arabia in my opinion affects the work of media. For example, censorship</p>	<p>P 7: “In my opinion censorship is affecting negatively the practice of journalism and also</p>

	<p>censorship should be starting from the organisation the PR officer works in because when I publish something the code of ethics that I learnt during my study will help me to not cross any red lines. When the news reach the newspaper the journalist will not do any effort to check the validity of the news so there is not censorship from the newspapers. The third stage which is after publishing, no organisation will question the PR officer or the journalist after publishing.”</p>	<p>is reducing the credibility of the media because they cannot say the truth sometimes or they can not spot light on some important subjects because they are aware censorship will not let this information to be published.”</p>	<p>for me as a PR officer when I communicate with the media, sometimes the censorship limits my work.”</p>
	<p>P 12: “The censorship is important and we need to have it because the censorship will not involve you in some issues and for me as a PR practitioner in a government institution we don’t have any problem with the censorship because we are part of the government and we work for the government. For us as a government institution, the censorship will not influence us how we write the news because we are following the rules.”</p>	<p>P 16: As general answer I would say yes the censorship is affecting the work of media. However, all the world practices censorship and this is normal to make a clear path for everyone to follow. I believe censorship has a bad reputation because of the dictator censorship but the censorship that organises the work of media is acceptable and important for the media.</p> <p>I think the practice of censorship in Saudi is not acceptable because sometimes there are dictatorship in treating the media matters and sometimes there is lose of censorship. For example, what is acceptable for someone will be forbidden for others so there is not fairness in treating the media cases. I think the censorship in Saudi is affecting the media practice negatively.</p>	

Appendix 20

Quotes examples of self-censorship as a positive guide to work category

<p>Self censorship as a positive guide in communication work</p>	<p>P 2: “I practice self censorship. I believe the self censorship helped me to not clash with the society and also with the government censorship. I don't think the self censorship affects my communication work negatively because the self censorship gives me the correct way to follow because this self censorship grows from me and comes from me because I am a part of this society and I know what the society wants and what society does not want.”</p>	<p>P 4: “In my opinion self censorship is very important. For example, if you are working with an institution you have to be aware about what they need and what is their vision, then you will be aware about what is suitable to be published and how to avoid negative things. I believe the effect of self censorship on me as PR officer has a positive influence because it will direct me to the right and safe way. For example once I was talking to a journalist and I told him about a new service that will be announced after 3 months and I told him to not publish anything about this service until when I told him. The next day the journalist published the news and we received big number of calls to ask how to apply for this job. In this case</p>	<p>P 9: “Self censorship is part of the personality of the professional PR officer. The self censorship is a proof of well understanding for the code of ethics. The self censorship will affect me in positive way because it will be a guide for me in my professional career.”</p>
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		if I censored my speech with the journalist I will not have this issue.”	
	<p>P 14: “I do practice self censorship and I believe self censorship is a tool for a successful PR manager. For example if you will be honest PR officer and this honesty comes from your conscience, this is a kind of self censorship. I know some of my PR colleagues in other organization left their position because they don't want to lie and their conscience did not feel good because they asked them to write wrong information and to mislead the public and he resigned. I believe self censorship is the frame that shows me the right way in practicing PR.”</p>	<p>P 17: I practice self censorship because I believe self censorship is more important and effective more than government censorship. The self censorship will depend on which kind of education the person got and also how his family raised him. I believe self censorship affects my work as a PR practitioner in a positive way.</p>	<p>P 21: “I practice self censorship because this will present my work in the most acceptable way to the public. I don't think self censorship affects my communication work negatively but it will direct me to the way the Saudi society will accept it.”</p>

Appendix 21

Quotes examples of Journalists category

3.3.1 Journalists	<p>P 2: “We have a good relationship with all the people that work in the media circle. We built a good data base about the majority of the journalists that we deal with and other list for the columnists and we invite them from time to time and we have a program called Journalists friends. We do give the journalists symbolic gifts and the majority of journalists started with us when they used to be young journalists and now they grew up with us in the organisation and we appreciate their effort through giving them an appreciation certificate and the prince, the president of the organisation hands them the certificate of appreciation and this is a big gift they like to have.”</p>	<p>P 4: “Here in my organisation we deal with certain journalists and we give them all the news about the organisation. We do not rely on the newspapers but we have good relations with some employees in the TV and radio, so from time to time we send some material to them to keep the relation stronger. And also if you do not give the journalists any benefits they will not take care of your news. For example one of the journalists applied to our institution to get funds and he was doing great journalism work. He wanted us to help him to get the funds even he did not fulfilled the conditions. He came to me to ask me to help get the funds and I told him I will see what I can do. But I was not planning to do anything for him</p>	<p>P 6: “I believe the press is the main partner for PR and one of the most important channel to use as PR officer to present your organisation in front of the society, however within the new competitive press which is the new media and the electronic press. The partnership between the press and PR is not like 15years ago nowadays we have more channels to spread our news like Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and the electronic press. Thus the columnist and journalists are active in the new media so we have to be also active because the way people search about news is now different from before. It is very easy to build the relationship with the journalist because he needs some news to publish but it is not easy to build a relationship with the columnist because he does not</p>
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		<p>especially he wanted me to do something illegal. To be honest we do not need the journalists as much as they need us. This journalist stopped working with us and we replaced him with another journalist.”</p>	<p>need you. But we know how to build the relationship through inviting columnist to visit our organisation and also this kind of invitation will give him an idea about our job so he will not write from what he will hear from outside so we open our organisation to him to get whatever information and also to make a good relationship with each other. In fact the journalists nowadays are begging us to give them scoop so I do not have any problem with the journalists because we are exchanging the benefits. There are ways to make the relationship with the journalist very strong. First of all we delay sending our news to the Saudi press agency to let the journalist take advantage from our news and also to put our news in a good page because if I tell the journalist that I send the news to the Saudi press agency he will not take care of the news because the Saudi press agency will send it to all the newspapers so there will be no unique news for his newspaper and in the end of the day when we sure our story</p>
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			went to the printer we will send the news to the Saudi press agency.”
	<p>P 17: “Media is the main partner for PR and also the main channel through sending the messages of PR and the trustworthy channel to use to send the messages and it must have a strong relations with the media officers to be able to communicate with your target audience in a good way and for me personally, the personal relations with the journalists helped me a lot in having the opportunity to publish my material in the best place and also the criticism of my organisation because of my personal relations with the journalists will be very little. Also another thing made my relations stronger with the journalist is the fact that I am one of the people who established the Riyadh media practitioner forum. This forum helped me to keep the relationship with my journalist friends stronger and also introduce me to a new journalist.</p> <p>The main tool to make the relationship with journalist stronger is through communicating with them through calling them from time to time or inviting them or going to visit them in their place. Also from the program that we made in my organisation to keep the relationship stronger with journalists that helped the organisation to make a friendly relation with them and through giving them gifts. And because I was in a PR department in a big hospital in Saudi Arabia some journalists asked me to open a file for them in the hospital or if one of the relatives has a health issue he will ask me to find a way to let his relatives to go to the hospital even if he can’t or he does not deserve to be treated in this government hospital for me I need to find a way to please my friend journalists and to not make him angry against me if I will not do this favour for him because if I will not do this favour for him he wouldn't publish news for me and wouldn't deal with me anymore.”</p>		<p>P 12: “Usually PR practitioners in companies are blackmailed by the journalists to give them some benefits to publish their news. Some of the columnists they use their pen to blackmail the organisations. for example if you will not employ his nephew you will be his enemy and they will start to write negative stories about your organisation and they will use their column for their personal benefits and not to improve the institution.”</p>
	<p>P 20: “I think when the journalist work as PR officer at the same time this will break the code of</p>	<p>P 26: “I built my relation with them through the events that we made together and through the invitations that I made to the journalists and through also giving gifts to the journalists. This makes the relation stronger</p>	

	<p>ethics because as a journalist he would not criticise the organisation that he works for as a PR officer so there is a big ethical issue in my opinion.”</p>	<p>and good. We give them different kinds of gifts. For example we give them a leather bag with a notebook and a pencil and sometimes we offer them travel tickets with full food board and expenses for staying away. Very often we do trips for the columnist and journalists and chief editors to let them write positive things about our work and also to encourage readers to go visit some places they will recommend through their articles and sometimes we also invite them if we have an exhibition booth outside of Saudi Arabia and we pay all expenses and the reason why we do this is to win the journalists and make them on our side all the time.”</p>
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Appendix 22

Interviewees education, age and job title

Participant Code	Participant Education	Age	Job Title
Participant1	-Ph. D. in Media. -Master Degree in Journalism and public relations. -Bachelor Degree in Journalism and public relations.	50	Director of the general administration of communication and information
Participant2	-Bachelor in Sociology. -Master in Media.	37	Public relations officer
Participant3	-Bachelor of Science in food and human nutrition.	27	Public relations officer
Participant4	-Bachelor in Business Administration, Master in Public Relations.	36	Public relations director
Participant5	-Bachelor of public administration.	29	Public relations officer
Participant6	- Bachelor in PR.	34	Manager assistant of the Public relations department
Participant7	- Bachelor in Arabic language.	49	Public relations director
Participant8	- Bachelor in Computer Science and several diplomas in a variety of disciplines.	37	Public relations officer
Participant9	- Bachelor in English language.	37	Media relations Manager
Participant10	- Diploma in Agricultural Institute.	56	Director of the general administration of Public relations
Participant11	- Master of Arts in Communication Studies, Marshall University (2008). - BA in Journalism and Public Relations - Imam Muhammad bin Saud University (2002).	34	Public relations officer
Participant12	- Bachelor in PR and media.	28	Public relations officer
Participant13	- High school	42	Public relations officer
Participant14	- Bachelor in Arabic language.	37	Public relations director and the Spokesman
Participant15	-Bachelor in PR and media. -Master in PR	32	Public relations officer
Participant16	- Bachelor in PR and Journalism.	45	

	Master in PR.		
Participant17	-Bachelor in media. -Master in Journalism.	46	Public relations director
Participant18	- High school.	38	Public relations officer
Participant19	- Diploma in Financial Management.	26	Public relations officer
Participant20	--Bachelor in PR. -Master in Business Administration.	40	Public relations director
Participant21	- Bachelor in PR and media.	34	Public relations officer
Participant22	- Bachelor in biology.	36	Public relations officer
Participant23	-Bachelor in media. -Master in PR.	44	Public relations director
Participant24	- Bachelor in communication and media studies.	42	Public relations director
Participant25	-Bachelor in Arabic language. -Master in journalism and mass communication.	35	Public relations officer
Participant26	-Bachelor in journalism. -Master in Media.	40	Public relations officer
Participant27	-Bachelor in Arabic language. -Master in Islamic culture. Master in Marketing.	54	Public relations director

Appendix 23

List of Codes, definition and examples

Code	Definition	Example
Knowledge gained from academic various disciplines	Knowledge that PR practitioners learnt and have from different subjects they studied in university	P 8: “I believe my degree in computer science helped me to be advanced when I use the social media platforms for my PR work.”
Journalism	Journalism experience seen as useful knowledge	P 23: “I entered PR because my work is close to PR which is journalism. Thus journalism and PR are completing each other so I worked the past years as a PR consultant because I have a good journalism background.”
Hands-on and tacit public relations knowledge	Hands-on knowledge is public relations knowledge that comes from every day experience Tacit knowledge consists of social skills and charisma	P 27: “the person that has a good experience in PR and also has all the PR skills should work in PR.”
Institutionalising public relations profession		
Public relations qualifications	The value and importance of Public relations qualification	P 20: “I do not think the certificate is important to work in PR because if you have an English or psychology degree or even only high school it will be enough to work in PR.”
Public relations associations	The PR associations activities and role in PR practitioner’s life	P 6: “The Saudi PR association is not active and not updating their website and not going to improve my skills so I did not bother myself to register with them.”
Public relations training	PR training quality and value	P 4: “I am interested in

	for PR practitioners	taking more courses in PR. For example I'm interested in taking courses in organising PR campaigns through social media and I believe the course will help me to develop my PR skills.”
Saudi Arabian exceptionalism		
Conservatism	conservatism refers to society's strict boundaries, such as privacy, gender separation, commitment to religion and culture, preserving traditions.	P 7: “I think Saudi society has a unique characteristic. For example being a conservative and religious society, this is one of the unique characteristics and also keeping the customs and Saudi traditions and protect it from disappearing.”
Privacy and boundaries	Privacy refers to respecting gender separation, society dressing conservative.	P 26: “If we have a conference we wouldn't mix the agenda and we will not put a man and a woman next to each other. We need to put a section for men and a section for women.”
Customs and traditions	Preserving customs and traditions such as being welcoming to guest, offering food, gifts to guests.	P 3: “Some people are doing certain things not because they believe in it but just to follow their tradition and customs, to no ruin their family reputation and his reputation.”
Karam	Gift giving	P 3: “Karam is important in the work of PR for example if you give an important gift to the journalists such as an iPad you will make him reliable. I guess there is a strong link between karam and the work of PR.”
Family and tribe		
Family	Extended family that includes grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins.	P5: “The family is one of the important element in the Saudi society so we do have here a strong relation between the family and the individual.”
Tribe	The tribe is viewed as an extended social group and a social distinction for individuals that has influence	P 9: “The tribe in Saudi Arabia does not have a strong influence on people like before but now the tribe

	over the individuals' decisions.	is only an administrative reference."
Wasta influence on the PR employment		
Negative wasta	Negative wasta is viewed as nepotism	P 2: I believe PR suffered from Wasta in employing unqualified people and I think the main reason for that is because PR is a theoretical field so it is normal to have this kind of breakthrough.
Positive Wasta	Positive wasta is viewed as a networking, helping PR practitioners to publish their work.	P 2: "Wasta is everywhere in Saudi. Wasta is one of the PR officer strengths. For example, when the PR officer is late in sending the news to the newspaper if he has a Wasta he could publish his news even if he was late."
Islamic culture	Saudi culture with Islamic religion features	P 16: "I believe the Saudi culture is coming from the Islamic culture."
Language and religion	Religion used in PR communication	P 9: "We do use some Islamic themes in the CSR work. For example, we use a religious quote in Ramadan to increase the awareness of the importance of the holy month."
Censorship	Censorship laws that affect PR practice	P 7: "In my opinion censorship is affecting negatively the practice of journalism and also for me as a PR officer when I communicate with the media, sometimes the censorship limits my work."
Self censorship as a positive guide in communication work	Self censorship seen as a moral guide to protect the individual 's career	P 9: "Self censorship is part of the personality of the professional PR officer. The self censorship is a proof of well understanding for the code of ethics. The self censorship will affect me in positive way because it will be a guide for me in my professional career."
Media relations		
Journalists	The relationship between journalists and PR	P 20: "I think when the journalist work as PR officer

	practitioners	at the same time this will break the code of ethics because as a journalist he would not criticise the organisation that he works for as a PR officer so there is a big ethical issue in my opinion.”
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